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'WESTERN WANDERINGS.'¹

BY SIR ARTHUR CONAN DOYLE.

III.

I SEEM to have passed with one giant stride from Montreal to the Prairie, but, as a matter of fact, it is not until one has reached the Prairie that the traveller meets with new conditions and new problems. He traverses Ontario with its prosperous mixed farms and its fruit-growing villages, but the general effect is the same as in Eastern America. Then comes the enormous stretch of the Great Lakes, that wonderful inland sea, with great ocean-going steamers. We saw the newly built *Noronic*, destined altogether for passenger traffic, and worthy to compare, both in internal fittings and outward appearance, with many an Atlantic liner. The Indians looked in amazement at La Salle's little vessel. I wonder what La Salle and his men would think of the *Noronic*! For two days in great comfort we voyaged over the inland waters. They lay peaceful for our passage, but we heard grim stories of winter gusts and of ships which were never heard of more. It is not surprising that there should be accidents, for the number of vessels is extraordinary, and being constructed with the one idea of carrying the maximum of cargo, they appear to be not very stable. I am speaking now of the whale-back freight carriers and not of the fine passenger service, which could not be beaten.

I have said that the number of vessels is extraordinary. I have been told that the tonnage passing through Sault Ste. Marie, where the lakes join, is greater than that of any port in the world. All the supplies and manufactures for the West move one way, while the corn of the great prairie, and the ores from the Lake Superior copper and iron mines move the other. In the Fall

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there comes the triumphant procession of the harvest. Surely in more poetic days banners might have waved and cymbals clashed, and priests of Ceres sung their hymns in the vanguard, as this flotilla of mercy moved majestically over the face of the waters to the aid of hungry Europe. However, we have cut out the frills, to use the vernacular, though life would be none the worse could we tinge it a little with the iridescence of romance. Suffice it now to say, that an average railway truck contains 1000 bushels of wheat, that there are forty trucks in a corn train, the whole lift being 40,000 bushels, and that there exists at least one freighter which is capable of carrying 400,000 bushels, or ten train loads. The sinking of such a ship would seem to be a world's calamity.

We stopped at Sault Ste. Marie, the neck of the hour-glass between the two great lakes of Huron and Superior. There were several things there which are worthy of record. The lakes are of a different level, and the lock which avoids the dangerous rapids is on an enormous scale; but, beside it, unnoticed save by those who know where to look and what to look for, there is a little stone-lined cutting no larger than an uncovered drain—it is the detour by which for centuries the voyageurs, trappers, and explorers moved their canoes round the Sault or fall on their journey to the great solitudes beyond. Close by it is one of the old Hudson Bay log forts, with its fireproof roof, its loop-holed walls, and every other device for Indian fighting. Very small and mean these things look by the side of the great locks and the huge steamers within them. But where would locks and steamers have been had these others not taken their lives in their hands to clear the way?

I do want to take my hat off once again to the French Canadian. He came of a small people. At the time of the British occupation, I doubt if there were more than a hundred thousand of them, and yet the mark they have left by their bravery and activity upon this Continent is an ineffaceable one. You pass right through the territory of the United States, down the valleys of the Illinois and of the Mississippi, and everywhere you come across French names: Marquette, Joliet, St. Louis, Mobile, New Orleans. How come these here? It was the French Canadians who, when the English colonies were still clinging to the edge of the ocean, pushed round from the North into the heart of the land. French Canadians first traversed the great American rivers and sighted the American Rockies. Keep farther north and still their footsteps are always marked deep in the soil before you. Cross the whole vast plain of

Central Canada and reach the Mountains. What is that called, you ask ? That is Mount Miette. And that ? That is Tête Jaune. And that lake ? It is Lake Brulé. They were more than scouts in front of an army. They were so far ahead that the army will take a century yet before it reaches their outposts. Brave, enduring, light-hearted, romantic, they were and are a fascinating race. The ideals of the British and of the French stock may not be the same, but while the future of the country must surely be upon British lines, the French will leave their mark deeply upon it. Five hundred years hence their blood will be looked upon as the aristocratic and distinctive blood of Canada, and even as the Englishman is proud of his Norman ancestor, so the most British Canadian will proudly trace back his pedigree to the point where some ancestor had married with a Tachereau or a De Lotbinière. It seems to me that the British cannot be too delicate in their dealings with such a people. They are not a subject people but partners in empire, and should in all ways be treated so.

The other sight which interested us at Sault Ste. Marie was an Indian or half-breed school. The young ladies who conducted it seemed to be kindness itself, but the children struck me as mutinous little devils. Not that their actions were anything but demure and sedate, but red mutiny smouldered in their eyes. All the wrongs of their people seemed printed upon their cast-iron visages. Their race has little to complain of from the Canadian Government, which has treated them with such humanity that they have really become a special endowed class living at the expense of the community. Still, there is the perennial fact that where they once owned lake and forest, they now are confined to the fixed reserve. That no doubt is the whisper which brings that brooding scowl upon young faces. They are a cruel people, and in the days of torture the children were even more bloodthirsty than the rest. They are a race of caged falcons, and perhaps it is as well that they are not likely to survive the conditions which they loved.

By the way, I have never understood how anyone could look at a number of Red Indians of any age or tribe and doubt where they came from. They are obvious Asiatics—Tartars, or Chinese, with an occasional dash of Esquimaux. This seems to me to apply to the Indians as far south as Mexico ; but if so, who peopled America before these wanderers came across ? I have never heard of any primitive race unless it be the digger Indians of the South. There are no vestiges of human occupation, as far as I know, which bear any

signs of great age. Was the whole Continent an empty derelict till within a recent period, with only the wild beasts to wander over its vast plains and forests? I write this far from books of reference, but except an ancient skull dug up under doubtful circumstances at Calaveras, I cannot remember any signs of ancient man, though the extinct animals ran to size and number as nowhere else upon earth. On the other hand, in Central America one comes at once upon the signs of ancient civilisations and of vanished empires, founded apparently by races who came not from Asia, but either from the South or from the Sea. If one looks upon the monstrous figures of Easter Island and compares them with the Mexican or Peruvian statues, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that in the one you see the germ of the other, and that the Central American and Peruvian empires had their origin far out in the Pacific Ocean.

The Twin Cities of Fort William and Port Arthur, at the head of Lake Superior, form, I think, the most growing community of Canada. They call them Twin Cities, but I expect, like their Siamese predecessors, they will grow into one. Already the suburbs join each other, though proximity does not always lead to amalgamation or even to cordiality, as in the adjacent towns of St. Paul and Minneapolis. When the little American boy was asked in Sunday school who persecuted Saint Paul, he 'guessed it was Minneapolis.' But in the case of Fort William and Port Arthur they are so evidently interdependent that it is difficult to believe that they will fail to coalesce; when they do, I am of opinion that they may grow to be a Canadian Chicago, and possibly become the greatest city in the country. All lines converge there, as does all the lake traffic, and everything from East and West must pass through it. If I were a rich man and wished to become richer, I should assuredly buy land in the Twin Cities. Though they lie in the very centre of the broadest portion of the Continent, the water communications are so wonderful that an ocean-going steamer from Liverpool or Glasgow can now unload at their quays.

The grain elevators of Fort William are really majestic erections, and with a little change of their construction might be æsthetic as well. Even now the huge cylinders into which they are divided look at a little distance not unlike the columns of Luxor. This branch of human ingenuity has been pushed at Fort William to its extreme. The last word has been said there upon every question covering the handling of grain. By some process, which is far beyond my unmechanical brain, the stuff is even divided auto-

matically according to its quality, and there are special hospital elevators where damaged grain can be worked up into a more perfect article.

By the way, it was here, while lying at a steamship wharf on the very edge of the city, that I first made the acquaintance of one of the original inhabitants of Canada. A cleared plain stretched from the ship to a wood some hundreds of yards off. As I stood upon deck I saw what I imagined to be a horse wander out of the wood and begin to graze in the clearing. The creature seemed ewe-necked beyond all possibility, and looking closer I saw to my surprise that it was a wild moose. Could anything be more characteristic of the present condition of Canada—the great mechanical developments of Fort William within gun-shot of me on one side, and this shy wanderer of the wilderness upon the other? In a few years the dweller in the great city will read of my experience with the same mixture of incredulity and surprise with which we read the letter of the occasional correspondent whose grandfather shot a woodcock in Maida Vale.

Talking of moose, an extraordinary adventure befell the train in which we travelled, some few hours before we boarded it. In the middle of the night the engine, rounding a curve, crashed into a bull moose which was standing between the metals. I daresay the glaring headlights petrified the poor creature with terror. The body passed under the engine and uncoupled it from the tender, so that it ran on by itself, leaving the train behind. It was only when the engine returned and the cause of the incident was searched for that the dead body of the creature was discovered at the rear of the train, jammed under the dining-car.

Beside the growing modern town I saw some rude mouldering shacks which are, as I learn, the wooden houses of the old original Jesuit mission of Thunder Bay, the farthest point reached in the old days by these brave priests, who reckoned that it took them always a full year in canoes up the Ottawa and along the chain of lakes before they could reach their parish. I am intensely conscious of how valuable every link with the past will be in the days to come, and I implored some leading citizens to remove one of these huts to their town park, to furnish it in the old fashion, and to piously preserve it for all time. I should be proud to feel that I had helped to rescue such a national possession.

The true division between the East and West of Canada is not the Great Lakes, which are so valuable as a waterway, but lies

in the five hundred miles of country between the Lakes and Winnipeg. It is barren, but beautiful, covered with forest which is not large enough to be of value as lumber. It is a country of rolling plains covered with low trees with rivers in the valleys. The soil is poor. It is really a problem what to do with this belt, which is small according to Canadian distances, but is none the less broader than the distance between London and Edinburgh. Unless minerals are found in it, I should think that it will be to Canada what the Highlands of Scotland are to Britain—a region set apart for sport because it has no other economic use. The singular thing about this barren tree land is that it quite suddenly changes to the fertile prairie at a point to the east of Winnipeg. I presume that there is some geological reason, but it was strange to see the fertile plain run up to the barren woods with as clear a division as between the sea and the shore.

And now at last I am to the west of Winnipeg and on that prairie which means so much both to Canada and to the world. It is wonderfully impressive to travel swiftly all day from the early summer dawn to the latest evening light, and to see always the same little clusters of houses, always the same distant farms, always the same huge expanse stretching to the sky-line, mottled with cattle, or green with the half-grown crops. You think these people are lonely. What about the people beyond them and beyond them again, each family in its rude barracks in the midst of the 160 acres which form the minimum farm? No doubt they are lonely, and yet there are alleviations. When a man or woman is working on their own property and seeing their fortune growing, they have pleasant thoughts to bear them company. It is the women, I am told, who feel it most, and who go prairie-mad. Now they have rigged up telephone circles which connect up small groups of farms and enable the women to relieve their lives by a little friendly gossip, when the whole district thrills to the news that Mrs. Jones has been in the cars to Winnipeg and bought a new bonnet. At the worst the loneliness of the prairie can never, one would think, have the soul-killing effect of loneliness in a town. 'There is always the wind on the heath, brother.'

Land is not so easily picked up now by the emigrant as in the old days, when 160 acres beside the railroad were given away free. There is still free land to be had, but it is in the back country. However, this back country of to-day is always liable to be opened

up by the branch railway lines to-morrow. On the whole, however, it seems to be more economical, if the emigrant has the money, to buy a partially developed well-situated farm, than to take up a virgin homestead. That is what the American emigrants usually do who have been pouring into the country, and they know best the value of such farms, having usually come from exactly similar ones just across the border, the only difference being that they can get ten acres in Canada for the price of one in Minnesota or Iowa. They hasten to take out their papers of naturalisation and make, it is said, most excellent and contented citizens. Their energy and industry are remarkable. A body of them had reached the land which they proposed to buy about the time that I was in the West; they had come over the border with their wagons, their horses, and their ploughs. Being taken to the spot by the land agent, the leader of the party tested the soil, cast a rapid glance over the general prairie, and then cried, 'I guess this will do, boys. Get off the ploughs.' The agent who was present told me that they had broken an acre of the prairie before they slept that night. These men were German Lutherans from Minnesota and they settled in the neighbourhood of Scott. It may be hard for the British farmer, unused to the conditions, to compete against such men; but at least it must be clear to him that there is no use his emigrating with a view to agriculture in the Western States of America, when the Americans are themselves flocking into Canada. The gains upon the farms are very considerable. It is not unusual for a man to pay every expense which he has incurred, including the price of the land, within the first two years. After that, with decent luck, he should be a prosperous man, able to bring up a family in ease and comfort. If he be British and desires to return to the Old Country, it should not be difficult for him to save enough in ten or twelve years to make him, after selling his farm, more or less independent for life. That is, as it seems to me, an important consideration for many people who hesitate to break all the old ties and feel that they are leaving their motherland for ever.

Everyone agrees that the emigrant farmer should have a hundred pounds as a minimum for his actual start, apart from whatever he may have to give for the land. The man who has not the money must earn it before he can take over even a free homestead. But it is not difficult for him to earn it if he is saving and industrious. Two or three years' working for others, or, better still, learning his trade in some mixed farm in Ontario, would give him

the pounds. It is to be noted that even in the corn-growing West the mixed farms are those which seem to give the best and most secure results. Hog-raising, horse-breeding, dairy produce—these are lucrative insurances against a bad crop.

There is no end to the agricultural possibilities of the West and North-West of Canada. There is only an end to the railway development, but that is being pushed forward as fast as the necessary capital can be supplied. Up in the Peace River district, far to the north of the present grainlands, there is an enormous area where the soil is so luxuriantly prolific that fifty bushels can be taken from the acre, and the wheat which has been sown in June can be gathered within ten weeks. There is room for a million large farms in this quarter. Considering how rich these farmers may become, and how long is the winter at that high latitude, I should not be surprised to see the development of a large migratory population, who would come with the early spring, and in the late fall would descend to the warm, pleasant places of the British Columbian coast, there to amuse themselves until work time came round once more.

So much about farms and farming. I cannot see how one can write about this western part and avoid the subject which is written in green and gold from sky to sky. There is nothing else. Nowhere is there any sign of yesterday—not a cairn, not a monument. Life has passed here, but has left no footstep behind. But stay, the one thing which the old life still leaves is just this one thing—footsteps. Look at them in the little narrow black paths which converge to the water—little dark ruts which wind and twist. Those are the buffalo runs of old. Gone are the Cree and Blackfoot hunters who shot them down. Gone, too, the fur traders who bought the skins—Chief Factor MacTavish, who entered into the great Company's service as a boy, spent his life in slow promotion from Fort This to Fort That, made a decent Presbyterian woman of some Indian squaw, and finally saw with horror in his old age that the world was crowding his wild beasts out of their pastures. Gone are the great herds upon which both Indian hunter and fur trader were parasitical! Indian, trader, and buffalo all have passed, and here on the great plains are these narrow runways as the last remaining sign of a vanished world.

Edmonton is the capital of the western side of the Prairie, even as Winnipeg of the eastern. I do not suppose the average Briton has the least conception of the amenities of Winnipeg. He

would probably be surprised to hear that the Fort Garry Hotel there is quite as modern and luxurious as any hotel in Northumberland Avenue. There are no such luxuries as yet in Edmonton, though the Grand Trunk Pacific is preparing one which will equal the Fort Garry. The town is in a strangely half-formed condition, rude and raw, but with a great atmosphere of energy, bustle, and future greatness. With its railway connections and waterways it is bound to be a large city. At present the streets are full of out-of-works, great husky men, some of them of magnificent physique, who find themselves at a loss, on account of cessations in railroad construction. They tell me that they will soon be reabsorbed, but meantime the situation is the rudest object-lesson in economics that I have ever witnessed. Here are these splendid men, ready and willing to work. Here is a new country calling in every direction for labour. How come the two things to be even temporarily disconnected? There can be but one word. It is want of capital. And why is the capital wanting? Why is the work of the railroads held up? Because the money market is tight in London—London which finds, according to the most recent figures, 73 per cent. of all the money with which Canada is developed. Such is the state of things. What will amend it? How can capital be made to flow into the best channels? By encouragement and security and the hope of good returns. I never heard of any system of socialism which did not seem to defeat the very object which it had at heart. And yet it is surely deplorable that the men should be here, and that the work should be here, and that none can command the link which would unite them.

(To be concluded.)

BEHIND THE MASK.

*'Quo magis in dubiis hominem spectare periculis
Convenit adversisque in rebus noscere qui sit ;
Nam verae voces tum demum pectore ab imo
Eiciuntur et eripitur persona, manet res.'*

LUCRETIVS.

At Eton, where beyond his peers
For slackness he was celebrated,
He wasted four expensive years,
And then was superannuated.
Cambridge denied him a degree—
His failure in exams. was chronic—
But *en revanche* the A.D.C.
Crowned him with laurels histrionic.

Slim, elegant, with ample means—
Which he miscalled the merest pittance—
To Fashion's most exclusive scenes
His talents gained him prompt admittance.
For he was full of parlour tricks ;
Could mimic Little Tich or Sarah ;
And danced with caracoles and kicks
Like Lottie Collins in Ta-ra-ra.

He shone at trimming ladies' hats ;
He wore the most expensive clothing ;
He seemed the tamest of tame cats
That ever moved an athlete's loathing.
At country houses where he stayed
He never shot, he never hunted ;
And only boated when he made
Secure of being rowed or punted.

By normal men and women barred,
Adored by Amazons and minxes,
He was a riddle, quite as hard
To solve as any of the Sphinx's.

The many laughed or loathed, but one,
His mother, widowed and bedridden,
Found in her fond and only son
The heart that from the world was hidden.

So when the trump of war was blown,
Those whom his monkey tricks revolted,
On hearing that the bird had flown,
Assumed that he had funk and bolted.
But they were wrong: the goal he sought
Was in the neighbourhood of 'Wipers,'
And there for three long months he fought
And faced the German shells and snipers.

To gain him entrance to the ranks
His real age required correction;
But this involved no trouble, thanks
To his immaculate complexion.
And though before the Grand Assize
He may not be adjudged veracious,
In this, the last of all his lies,
He was quite 'splendidly mendacious.'

His regiment had fought right through
From Mons, and suffered heavy losses;
Among the dead they mourned were two
Who won but never wore their Crosses.
And though their souls were unsubdued,
Their courage high and lion-hearted,
Small wonder was it if their mood
Was not so gay as when they started.

The Colonel, whose unerring *flair*
Sized up this elegant newcomer,
At once encouraged him to air
His talents as a mime and mummer.
He wasn't handy with a spade,
But, as they all acknowledged after,
His singing and his stories made
The frozen Tommies roar with laughter.

His comrades recognised his grit,
His Colonel spoke of a commission ;
But, no, he liked ' to do his bit '
In a subordinate position.
' I doubt,' he said, ' my power to lead—
Still more to rally—men in action ;
I'd rather be their friend in need
Whenever they require distraction.'

He always kept a smiling face,
He never saw the use of croaking ;
And in the very tightest place
Found opportunities for joking.
He jested in the jaws of Death ;
He kept at bay that grim marauder ;
And with his very latest breath
Was imitating Harry Lauder.

For, as he stuck it out and played
The game—the only game that thrilled him—
During a ' lively cannonade,'
The Germans shelled his trench and killed him.
Hundreds of England's sons as brave
Will fall to-day, will fall to-morrow ;
But those who gathered round his grave
Will never know a keener sorrow.

' We miss him daily more and more '—
So wrote the Colonel to his mother—
' For every soldier in the corps
Had come to love him like a brother.'
And those who dimly guess at half
The lessons that he died in learning,
Now envy him an epitaph
That many a saint has failed in earning.

C. L. G.

1870

THROUGH THE EYES OF PRIVATE PECKHAM.

PRIVATE ROBERT PECKHAM clenched his teeth, sought cover vainly behind a turnip top, and for the tenth time that morning recharged his rifle magazine. The screeching of shrapnel overhead and the continuous ping of bullets permitted little consecutive thought. Yet, unconsciously, he was steadily breathing the refrain of a hymn which had haunted him ever since the last service he had attended at his village church. That his mind should have turned to things spiritual may seem surprising. To those who know, however, there can be no cause for wonder.

The ping of bullets upon the ground around him disturbed him little. Experience had taught him that a bullet struck meant a danger already past. A burst of shrapnel a yard to his left laid low his nearest comrade; then a clod of earth struck him sharply on the mouth.

The incentive was sufficient. A suddenly aroused savage desire to find something to strike obsessed him. The fleeting memory of his peaceful village was drowned in a wave of barbaric impulse. The blood surged to his temples. With eyes aflame, he was upon his feet.

Spiked helmets visible through the undergrowth of a copse not fifty yards on his left drew him like a magnet; then again, automatically following the tenets of war, he clung to mother earth.

Another short rush reduced the distance to twenty yards. His eyes shone like those of an animal whose prey is in sight. His jaw firmly set, he forgot those about him. What had at first been an impersonal affair now assumed a different aspect. The man on his left had been his bosom pal.

His ears at acutest tension, he lay like a runner awaiting the voice of the starter. His captain's order 'to charge' found him already 'seeing red.' With bayonet poised and a curse upon his lips, he plunged forward.

Ten seconds later Private Peckham felt a blow upon his thigh resembling contact with a weighty stick, and spun round like an expiring tee-totum. Recovering almost immediately, he attempted to rise, collapsed promptly, and lay still.

Presently, rubbing a grimy hand across his eyes, he awoke to consciousness and groped for his water-bottle. A generous pull

at it revived him considerably. The shrieking of shells still continued, but the local tide of small-arm conflict had moved forward. The copse, lately occupied by the Germans, was now empty. A wood does not spell safety; yet cover of any kind is preferable to an open turnip field. He did not expect the bearers of the Field Ambulance to 'collect' him for some time. In the meanwhile he must be his own surgeon. It was but an affair of outposts.

Slowly and laboriously he managed at last to drag himself beneath the shelter of the wood, then collapsed once more. The body of a dead German, his round, Teutonic face half covered by a blood-stained helmet, acted for the moment as a convenient pillow. Recovering, he laughed grimly, annexed the enemy's helmet, methodically slung it by its chain to his haversack, and crawled to the next mound. His leg, numbed at first, was now regaining life. With life comes trouble.

From a pocket in the skirt of his jacket he proceeded to extract a small packet. His fingers trembled pitifully. His wits, once more thoroughly alert, struggled to remember what the medical officer had taught in his explanation of the use of the 'first field dressing.'

To his relief, he found the instructions printed on the package sufficient for him. Tearing the cover open with his teeth, he extracted the contents of gauze and bandages. Then he gave his attention to a study of his wound, and gasped for breath as he noted the horrible mess of things. He had often wondered what it was like to be wounded. He knew now.

It was a delicious morning. A few fleecy clouds floated lazily northwards. That way lay England. At that hour of the day the villages would probably be knocking off work for dinner, the children wandering home from school. It seemed to Peckham a very long time since he had been to school, even a long time since he had left home.

The crash of an ill-directed shell amongst the trees awoke him to a sense of present necessity. He slowly extracted bits of muddy khaki cloth from his wound, and smiled wanly. Opening his clasp knife, he cut away the remnants of his trousers. The pads and bandages were simple enough. He adjusted them with what skill necessity vouchsafed to him, but the effort cost him much. Closing his eyes, he lay back against a tree, and his lips moved in a silent prayer such as they had never before uttered.

The afternoon shadows of an autumn day lengthened rapidly.

Bob Peckham, ghastly pallid, lay quite still. The vision of his village which had clung to him all day recurred with painful persistence. The severity of his wound held him in a grip of abject fear. A premonition that he was never to see his home again had taken possession of him.

Presently he became conscious of warm blood permeating the bandages. A cold perspiration covered his brow. He felt instinctively what that meant. With an involuntary cry for help, he raised himself on his elbow, and glared across the level landscape.

Straight lines of poplars, a canal, and a deserted, shell-racked farm-house afforded no help. His detachment—or what was left of it—had evidently regained the trenches, and the bursting shells in the sunlight caused all but the dead to keep cover. A solitary aeroplane circling above him sailed away into the mist. He watched it until his eyes failed. Despair seized him. He knew nothing of surgery, but the sickening gritting of bone upon bone told its own tale.

Private Bob Peckham awoke to find himself being lifted on a stretcher from an ambulance waggon. His leg, bound to splints, throbbed painfully. Where he was, and how he had got there, he could only conjecture. A long line of ambulances silhouetted in the light of a half moon awaited unloading. Figures flitting to and fro in the fitful light of cooking fires held his eyes. The medical orderlies, with basins and cups, ran hither and thither like imps of another world.

An officer of the Royal Army Medical Corps, emerging from the shadows, examined each patient. He paused longer than usual by Peckham's side, and grunted sympathetically. Ordering the bearers to 'go easy,' he passed on. A village cock, proud of his survival in such parlous times, crowed vociferously. Bob remembered hearing somewhere about what was called the romance of war. Was this it?

'Where am I?' he murmured.

'You're all right, old chum,' replied an orderly. 'This is a Clearing Hospital. Here, drink this!'

The cup of hot soup gave him new life. He forsook dreams for reality. Making no comment to the cheering words of the orderly, he looked about him, noting the massive stone-carved entrance to a church. The transit from the waggon was somewhat painful. A second cup of bovril, offered by another orderly, was

swallowed greedily. His surroundings, bizarre and ghostlike, held him entranced.

The interior of the building, dimly lit by lanterns, was strewn with stretchers and mattresses. These, almost touching one another up the length of the nave, were already nearly filled with wounded. Germans in their grey and Turcos in red lay side by side with mud-begrimed khaki figures. The orderlies, wending their way between the stretchers, worked methodically down the ranks.

The space beyond the chancel rails was still partially empty. Peckham did not know that it had been reserved for the most dangerous cases. There it was, however, that he found a place.

'Hullo, cocky,' cried a man with damaged head, arresting an orderly as he passed, 'got a bit of baccy?'

Peckham, instinctively groping for his pocket, attempted a response, ending in failure. He forgot it, however, in contemplation of a life-size figure of the Virgin set in a star-spangled grotto. The hiss of an acetylene field operating lamp, which hung from the side of a confession box, caught his unstable gaze next. It was drawing fantastic shadows from the stone pillars of the transepts. In a chapel on the right, dedicated to 'Our Lady of Miracles,' stood an operating table. The steam of an instrument sterilizer, the smell of chloroform, and the figures of the white-aproned surgeons told a tale which in his normal state of mind would have appalled the soldier. Familiarity with scenes of violence, however, breeds its own particular form of contempt.

Bob Peckham, with no more than a languid interest in a matter which seemed to be but the natural outcome of recent events, watched one man after another being placed on the operating table. He felt quite indifferent as to whether his turn came, or not. The groans of his fellow sufferers affected him not at all. The removal of his boots, which had not left his feet for a month, followed by a dose of brandy, caused him marked content.

He was at home again. His favourite hymn was echoing down the shadowy aisles of the church. War was nothing but a dream.

It was quite an hour before Peckham's turn came. The careful lifting of his stretcher caused him to open his eyes indifferently, then close them again.

He drank in the insidious fumes of the anæsthetic, which followed, without a move.

'Ready?' inquired the R.A.M.C. major, wiping his perspiring forehead.

'Yes,' answered the anæsthetist wearily. 'You will have to be quick though. He won't stand much, sir.'

'Afraid not,' grunted the major. 'Horrible smash! Has lost heaps of blood. However, it is neck or nothing. He will certainly die if his leg doesn't come off.' Turning to an improvised table, he selected his instruments and glanced at his subaltern. 'Tourniquet, please!'

For some moments the hissing song of the acetylene lamp, punctuated by the click of instruments, was the only immediate sound. An occasional call for help, or the groan of a strong man in the near distance, was attended to by those concerned. The instrument orderly stood attentively watching. Prompt obedience was necessary.

'One moment!' intervened the anæsthetist suddenly.

The major, straightening his back, stayed his hand and glanced interrogatively at the speaker.

'All right now, sir.'

'Good! Artery forceps, orderly!'

'He is doing better now, sir,' volunteered the subaltern with the chloroform. 'I thought he was going to defeat us a minute ago.'

'Ah! Bandages, orderly!'

'Another poor chap to fight the battle of life with one leg,' breathed the subaltern, putting down the chloroform mask. 'I wonder how many this makes altogether?'

'Haven't time to think,' answered the major. 'Besides, I doubt if he has much of life left to fight.' He sighed, rubbed his forehead with the back of his forearm, and turned away. 'And I am not sure that he isn't the luckier for it. Humph! Those big guns are going strong now. They are not far off either. I shouldn't be the least surprised if we have to do a bolt from here before we have finished.'

A minute later, Peckham, still snoring contentedly, again occupied his special six feet of chancel space. An orderly inspected the tin identity disc, hanging from his neck, by the light of a lantern and noted name and religion in a book. The patients in the nave were beginning to wake up to the interests of a new day.

A prick of a hypodermic needle awoke Bob Peckham once more to reality. Searching his strange environment, he saw the greyness of dawn permeating the vaulted building. One by one, details declared themselves. The profusion of pictures, gilded tracery

and candles dazed him. He had never been in a Romish church in his life.

Now concentrating his gaze upon a gigantic Calvary, he watched its human outlines gradually stand forth in relief from the stone background. The figure on the Cross momentarily grew more lifelike. The crude yellow light of the lantern, standing by the wounded man's side on an altar rail, paled beneath the soft tints from the blue and gold of ancient glass. He did not hear the sound of shells, nor the speech of those about him. He had eyes and ears for one thing only. The figure on the Cross beneath the window held him spellbound. The rough statuary, ennobled by distance, breathed life. All feeling of distress left him. He was still conscious of his wounds, but he smiled as one for whom such trifles mattered nothing.

The sun had been above the poplar tops for an hour. The medical staff, catching breakfast as they could be spared, blinked and yawned over their mess tins, but there was no time for rest.

The major suddenly raised his eyes from a patient. He had heard the voice of a woman.

In such a place women were few and far between. For the moment the intruder was concealed by a pillar which supported a holy-water stoup. The major stood expectant, contracting his eyes to focus her in the light of the doorway.

'Ah!' he murmured presently. 'A Sister of Mercy.'

'Pardon, monsieur,' said the little woman softly, raising limpid brown eyes to his; 'I come, if you will so permit, to bring a little wine and soup for your poor brave wounded.'

The major hesitated. Spies in every garb and form cropped up at intervals. He was, however, no mean judge of physiognomy. Besides, what could she learn? Mentally shrugging his shoulders, he met her charming smile without embarrassment.

'You are welcome, madame,' he said. 'And thank you!'

The little woman, bowing her acknowledgment, passed on. The officer watched her for a little time, then resumed his work.

She was no discriminator of persons. French, English, and German alike she visited. Soft-footed, sweet-voiced, she moved from man to man with compelling words and gestures. Hoarse exclamations of gratitude followed her. It was to those beyond the altar rails, however, that she gave her special attention. She had intuitively divined that there it was she was most needed.

Peckham had not noticed her approach. In due course, how-

ever, he turned his head at the sound of her voice. His eyes expressed no surprise as he found her kneeling beside him. Nothing now had power to surprise him.

He understood few words that she spoke, but the cool hand which touched his brow needed no speech to explain its meaning.

Presently, his eyes meeting hers, she held her crucifix before him, speaking gently, persuasively, with here and there a word of English, as if to force his understanding by sheer weight of earnestness.

Bob shook his head, but his glance again involuntarily sought the Calvary. The Sister nodded, whispered, placed her arm beneath his head, raised him slightly, and pointed.

For some seconds nothing was to be heard but the laboured breathing of the wounded man. The woman, content to observe his changing expression, made no sound.

At length she emitted a sigh of satisfaction. Whatever it was she saw in Private Peckham's face, it was enough. She lowered him gently, but remained kneeling at his side, immobile.

The eyes of the figure on the Cross had opened. How, or why, Peckham did not pause to question. For an appreciable time he stared fixedly. A mist came over his eyes. The figure on the Cross moved, smiled. Half rising on his stretcher, Bob stretched out his arms feebly. The little Sister, unnoticed, slipped away behind a pillar.

From beneath the window the figure of the Christ, clothed in filmy white, such as Peckham had so often seen depicted in pictures, floated through the shadows towards him. There was no canker of doubt in his mind concerning the reality of it. What he saw, that he knew. The Sister of Mercy, watching, sighed happily. She herself knew the power of those healing eyes, the relief that came to many a stricken soul through them. She had never seen all that Private Peckham saw, but that she did not know.

Perhaps Bob Peckham only dreamed; but who can define the limitations of a dream?

A few minutes later, an orderly, dishing out morning tea, stayed his hand as he reached Peckham and called an officer. The patient had fainted.

All through that day the heavy guns boomed incessantly. A fresh convoy of wounded arrived, and the capacity of the field hospital expanded into every nook and sacred corner of the church. The Sister of Mercy made several visits, and never failed to speak soft words to her new friend lying behind the chancel rails.

Towards evening there was a lull. Even battles ebb and flow. The weary officers and orderlies began to breathe more freely. At dusk news was received that an ambulance train had arrived at the village railway station, half a mile away. It was welcome!

The loading of the train took some hours. Stretcher after stretcher, each with its damaged freight, had to be carefully man-handled from church to station. Some were unfit to move; others, their thoughts on England, professed a strength which their wounds belied. Behind the church lay a row of blanket-covered figures which had found their long home without a train.

Peckham, his eyes ever and anon seeking the figure of the Calvary, objected strenuously to being moved. He was given his wish, and presently fell into a peaceful sleep.

The major rolled himself up in his sleeping-valise that night and slept without turning. He had been steadily at work for six-and-thirty hours. Fresh wounded might arrive at any time, but for the moment the future could look after itself.

The guns had ceased by daylight. An hour later, the medical staff, tentatively packing their gear, were awaiting possible orders to move. Where the tide of battle was flowing they did not yet know. There it was, however, that they expected to find themselves.

The major, having been sluicing his head in a bucket of cold water at the western end of the nave, raised his eyes to meet those of a priest.

'*Bon jour, Monsieur le docteur,*' said the latter politely.

'Ah, *bon jour, Monsieur le curé,*' replied the major, rubbing his face with a rough towel. 'I am afraid we have made a shocking spectacle of your beautiful church. However, we can soon clean it up.'

The curé, smiling, shook his head in negation.

'The poor wounded are truly welcome, *Monsieur le Commandant,*' he said. 'But would it be inconvenient if I celebrate mass as usual within the chancel, monsieur?'

'Not at all. Here—sergeant-major! Get the chancel—inside the rails—cleared of those mattresses and stuff. You can move the few wounded to one of the side chapels. The rest of the church can wait for the moment.'

Bob Peckham was much better for his night's rest. His wound was healing, and the major smiled his satisfaction as he took the opportunity of feeling his patient's pulse whilst the latter passed him on his stretcher. Bob answered questions readily enough,

and had eaten some breakfast. Nevertheless, he protested feebly against being moved. His reasons were unintelligible, and he refused to give any lucid explanation as to why he objected.

The old curé expressed his thanks, and wended his way across the road towards his house. In the meanwhile the Sister of Mercy returned with a bunch of roses and consolation for Private Peckham. She did not fail to note the longing look which filled his eyes as he vainly endeavoured to view the Christ from his new location—and understood.

By the time the curé had returned with his acolyte the neighbourhood of the altar was swept and clean.

The orderlies, still continuing their necessary work, kept eyes and ears open whilst the short service progressed. The spectacular effects were new to most of them. The aromatic odour of incense was a pleasant change after the smell of anæsthetics with which the building had reeked. The quiet dignity of the service, the droning voice of the curé, soothed their overwrought senses.

The major, seating himself in his erstwhile operating theatre, removed his cap, folded his arms, and gave himself up to the peacefulness of his environment. To escape the uproar of battle, with its grim accessories, even for a few stolen minutes, was wonderfully refreshing.

As he was endeavouring to imagine the scenes through which this medieval church must have passed during the ages, the service ended. The curé, at his elbow, interrupted his day-dreams. With a gesture of weariness, he rose to his feet.

'Your church is very beautiful, *Monsieur le curé*,' he volunteered. 'Although I have been here two days, this is the first time I have had time to observe it properly.'

'*Bon!*' exclaimed the curé, placing his hand on his visitor's arm. 'I am glad you admire it. Come! Permit me to act as guide, monsieur.' Leading the way to a corner of the chancel, he paused dramatically and pointed to the figure of the Calvary which stood beneath the large stained window, 'Have you studied that, monsieur?'

'The Crucifix! H'm! It is wonderfully painted,' murmured the major. 'Who was the artist?'

'An Italian who lived in the seventeenth century, monsieur. Observe the eyes!—intently, please.' The old man's eyes twinkled with a suspicion of humour. 'Do you see it?'

The major shifted his position.

'In this light the rays from the window produce a curious effect, monsieur,' prompted the curé.

'By Jove!' breathed the major at last. 'The eyes have opened!'

'Yes, monsieur.'

'And now they have shut again,' gasped the major.

The curé permitted himself to laugh softly.

'A clever painter, monsieur,' he said. 'A mere trick of painting, but none the less clever, is it not?'

'Extraordinary!' murmured the major, moving nearer the window. 'I see. Of course, the effect depends entirely upon what points of the closed eyes one's gaze is concentrated on. In one position one sees them closed, at another open.'

The curé nodded his head in acquiescence.

'That is all, monsieur. Nevertheless, simple folk claim that the figure possesses remarkable powers. Many declare that Christ smiles upon them in reality and cures their ailments.'

The major rubbed his forehead reflectively and slipped his arm through that of the priest.

'The flame of imagination, monsieur, fanned by a *soupçon* of reality, has cured many complaints. The eye of faith may see more than even you could believe possible, priest as you are. Hard-headed scientists call the phenomenon *auto-suggestion*.' Holding out his hand, he smiled politely. '*Bon jour, Monsieur le curé*, I am afraid my work is calling me.'

Private Robert Peckham did not die. That, according to all precedent, he should have done so the major will declare to this day. The experiences which befell him in that foreign church—the name even of which he had never learned—Private Peckham kept to himself. In his more virile moments he wonders if it was not all a dream, then truth forces itself again upon his bewildered senses. He is still nursing the stump of his leg in front of his mother's cottage in Hampshire. He has often told the tale of how he was wounded and what happened to him, as well as his powers of narration will permit. That the best part of the story is beyond the telling is a matter of which nobody, other than a certain little French Sister of Mercy, has any knowledge.

MAJOR R.A.M.C.

MAULEIANA: A STUDY IN JUDICIAL IRONY.

BY HIS HONOUR JUDGE PARRY.

EULOGISTS of Sir William Henry Maule have sought to satisfy posterity that he was some kind of a great man; but that was far from being the case. He was a learned judge—indeed, within the curtilage of the Courts all judges are *ex officio* learned judges, and by the courtesy of the Press the epithet obtains in obituary notices—but he was not a great judge. He was certainly a shrewd judge and a studious scholar; but his title to remembrance among those of his profession is not that he was a great man, but rather that he was a great character. His very moderate success at the Bar has been attributed by friendly critics to a want of sycophancy. He was always ‘blowing up his attorney,’ and the wretched fellow rebelled. As a matter of hard fact, attorneys rather like being kicked and cuffed by their counsel—if he is a big enough man. Russell knew the secret of this; but Maule was not a Russell.

On the bench the pithy common sense of his legal decisions, though very recognisable to any who care to turn over the dry pages of ‘Clark and Finnely’ and ‘Manning and Granger,’ are long forgotten and overwhelmed in the memories and traditions of the wit and irony with which he illumined the dullest wrangles in the Common Pleas or Exchequer. ‘An irony,’ says an old writer, ‘is a nipping yeast or a speech that hath the honey of pleasantness in its mouth and a sting of rebuke in its taile.’ Maule was a master of irony. Had he only made equal use of his other abilities he might have been remembered as a considerable advocate or even a powerful judge; but he had a gift which, in season or out of season, he was compelled to display—the gift of irony—and it is the echoes of these strange outbursts of his, coldly reported in careless memoirs or told with advantage over the mess table on circuit, that I have sought to collect and set down as Mauleiana.

There is a colourless book of Maule’s early life written by a niece who can never, one suspects, have heard of uncle’s wild flights of mockery and sarcasm. It portrays for you an industrious young man, a sort of legal curate, going through the blameless stages of a successful career. Of the early biographical material there displayed it is sufficient for our purpose to remember that Maule was born on April 25, 1788, at Edmonton in Middlesex; that his father

was a respectable doctor; that he was at school at his uncle's, near Ealing, and afterwards commenced residence at Trinity College, Cambridge.

Greville was at the same school and remembers Maule's uncle as 'an excellent scholar and a great brute.' He also recalls a vivid picture of young Maule stimulated to further and better educational studies by being 'suspended by the hair of the head while being well caned.' It is notable that years afterwards Greville met Maule at a club, and went up to him where he was reading a paper to renew the friendship of old schooldays. Maule looked up, grunted at him that it was 'too long ago to talk about,' and retired into his newspaper. Whereupon Greville says very shrewdly: 'So I set him down for a brute like his uncle and troubled him no further.' This anecdote of his ill manners is more than probable. A man who rejoices to exhibit his gifts of sarcasm and ridicule at the expense of his fellow men is bound to have his pleasanter social traits somewhat blunted in the practice.

Two further things may be set down by way of introduction. Maule was beyond doubt a very learned mathematician. He was a personal friend of Mr. Babbage who extols Maule's deep knowledge in his own science. He and Babbage would play a game of mental chess with each other to wile away the tedium of a coach journey—a feat not possible to men of ordinary powers of memory. It is interesting to remember that in Lewis Carroll, an ironist of a different type from Maule, we have another example of a deeply scientific mathematician revelling in the expression of ludicrous antiphrasis and quaint ridicule and mockage of commonplace humanity. Mr. Dodgson had a similar faculty of memory, and would amuse his sleepless nights going through a book or two of Euclid, the figures and letters of which he could visualise in the dark. At first blush the last man you would suspect of irony would be the mathematician. But it may be that the certitude that two and two make four, combined with some knowledge of the basic reasons why they make four, lures the scientist into the naughty mocking pleasure of exhibiting those simple figures in phantom forms of three and five to the utter confusion of the homely dunces around him.

One of the uses of wit, says Dr. Isaac Barrow, is to 'season matters otherwise distasteful or insipid with an unusual and thence grateful tang.' This, no doubt, is the moral charter of the judicial humourist. But the judge should not forget his more menial duties in the exercise of his humour. With Maule it is

safe to say that no solemnity of occasion ever stood between him and his 'nipping yeast.' This may be illustrated by the following well-authenticated story which has a real shudder in its humour.

A prisoner was found guilty of a sensational murder, and being asked in the usual way why sentence should not be passed upon him, exclaimed dramatically in a loud voice: 'May God strike me dead, my lord, if I did it!'

There was a hushed silence throughout the crowded Court. The spectators gazed at the prisoner in horror. Maule looked steadily in front of him and waited without a movement.

At length, after a pause of several moments, he coughed and began to address the prisoner in his dry asthmatic voice as though he were dealing with some legal point that had been raised in the case: 'Prisoner at the Bar, as Providence has not seen fit to interfere in your case, it now becomes my duty to pronounce upon you the sentence of death.'

This he did with the usual solemnities. The great humourist would have thought of the jest, of course, but he certainly would not have uttered it on such an occasion.

More easy to forgive is the harangue that he gave to poor Hall, the bigamist, without which no collection of Maule stories would be complete. It was the starting-point of the Divorce Act, and such marriage law reforms that we have since received date from Maule's ironical speech. The best account of it is in that charming volume of legal biography, Atlay's 'Victorian Chancellors.'

Hall was a labouring man convicted of bigamy and called up for sentence. Maule, in passing sentence, said that it did appear that he had been hardly used.

'I have indeed, my lord,' called out poor Hall; 'it is very hard.'

'Hold your tongue, Hall!' quoth the judge, 'you must not interrupt me. What I say is the law of the land which you in common with everyone else are bound to obey. No doubt it is very hard for you to have been so used and not to be able to have another wife to live with you when Mary Ann had gone away to live with another man, having first robbed you; but such is the law. The law in fact is the same to you as it is to the rich man; it is the same to the low and poor as it is to the mighty and rich, and through it you alone can hope to obtain effectual and sufficient relief, and what the rich man would have done you should have done also; you should have followed the same course.'

'But I had no money, my lord!' exclaimed Hall.

'Hold your tongue!' rejoined the judge, 'you should not interrupt me, especially when I am only speaking to inform you as to what you should have done and for your good. Yes, Hall, you should have brought an action and obtained damages, which probably the other side would not have been able to pay, in which case you would have had to pay your own costs, perhaps a hundred or a hundred and fifty pounds.'

'Oh, lord!' ejaculated the prisoner.

'Don't interrupt me, Hall!' said Maule, 'but attend. But even then you must not have married again. No; you should have gone to the Ecclesiastical Court and then to the House of Lords, where, having proved that all these preliminary matters had been complied with, you would then have been able to marry again! It is very true, Hall, you might say, "Where was all the money to come from to pay for all this?" And certainly that was a serious question as the expenses might amount to five or six hundred pounds while you had not as many pence.'

'As I hope to be saved, I have not a penny—I am only a poor man.'

'Well, don't interrupt me; that may be so, but that will not exempt you from paying the penalty for the felony you have undoubtedly committed. I should have been disposed to have treated the matter more lightly if you had told Maria the real state of the case and said, "I'll marry you if you choose to take your chance and risk it," but this you have not done.'

And so the judge gave Hall three months or, as some say, four. But that was because he had not told Maria all about it. For my part, I do not trace any real sympathy with Hall in Maule's address; nor can I find that he ever showed any very kindly feelings for the men and women who came before him. To Maule the Court was a machine not to administer justice, but to declare the law and compel its due observation. It did not worry Maule that injustice was going to be done, and he laid down with unctuous pleasure that 'it was much more important that a statute should receive its proper construction than that justice should be doled out to suit the circumstances of each particular case.' So high did he ride this hobby that his contemporaries credited him with the authorship of a new maxim: *Fiat jus ruat justitia*.

But irony is often a fair weapon, and Maule would sometimes use his gift by way of just rebuke. A crowd of women had thronged

the Court to listen to a case of an unpleasant character, and a witness hesitated to continue a certain part of his evidence in deference to feminine ears. Maule, who had already suggested that ladies should leave the Court, waved his hand blandly to the witness, saying, 'Out with it! Out with it! the ladies don't mind it, and you needn't mind me!'

Again, when Lord Chief Justice Wilde, on an appeal in a breach of promise case, took occasion to make a tirade against the present state of the law which allowed such an action at all, Maule in following opened his judgment as follows: 'The question of what the law ought to be, having now been amply discussed by My Lord, I will now for my part consider what it really is.' This bold rebuke of his chief was much admired at the time, though it is not to be supposed that it was seriously resented. Judges have from time immemorial been free to rebuke each other in a brotherly spirit, and doubtless the Lord Chief got his own back later on.

There are several excellent stories of his ironic advice to juries, in some of which matters are made clear to them and light is thrown on the sophistries of learned counsel; in others the shafts of wit wing their way high above the heads of the common citizens in the jury-box and fall useless to the ground.

Nothing can be better than his description of 'some evidence'—a favourite last straw of counsel in a bad case. Counsel persists that there is 'some evidence' to go to the jury, and the jury hearing there is 'some evidence' listen eagerly to the oration that seeks to magnify it into material for a verdict.

Maule said the last word on 'some evidence' when he summed up to a jury thus: 'Gentlemen, the learned counsel is perfectly right in law, there is some evidence upon that point; but he's a lawyer and you are not, and you don't know what he means by "some evidence." So I'll tell you. Suppose there was an action on a bill of exchange and six people swore that they saw the defendant accept it, and six others swore they heard him say he should have to pay it, and six others knew him intimately and swore to his handwriting; and suppose on the other side they called a poor old man who had been at school with the defendant forty years before, and had not seen him since, and he said he rather thought the acceptance was not his writing, why, there'd be *some* evidence that it was not. And that's what the learned counsel means in this case.'

But if Maule was emphatic on the futility of 'some evidence,'

he was very sound and clear—especially looking at the age in which he lived—on the danger of rejecting real evidence on some technical plea. A prisoner was charged with stealing pepper from the docks, and his counsel took the point that they had not proved the *corpus delicti*. Maule's common sense would not have this. 'It is the *offence* you have to prove, not the *corpus delicti*. If,' he continued, 'a man go into the London Docks sober without means of getting drunk and comes out of one of the cellars very drunk, wherein are a million gallons of wine, I think that would be reasonable evidence that he had stolen some of the wine in that cellar, though you could not prove that any wine was stolen or any wine was missed.'

How you could prove the *corpus delicti* specifically, when it was inside the prisoner, was too much for counsel to say.

That irony is not every man's food and that Maule cared on occasion for the display of his wit rather than the result of the trial before him is made clear by more than one mocking summing up which the common jury listened to with gaping but serious attention.

In the trial of a serious case of wounding with intent to do grievous bodily harm, the prisoner's counsel had sought to persuade the jury to find a verdict of a common assault, and Maule thought it sufficient to put the affair before them in the form, as he thought, of an absurdity. 'It is quite true,' he said, 'what the counsel for the prisoner has told you, that if the prisoner did not intend to do grievous bodily harm he could not be convicted of that offence. If, therefore, you are of opinion that the ripping up of the prosecutor's belly so as to cause the bowels to protrude was done without the intent of doing him any bodily harm, you should acquit the prisoner of the aggravated, and find him guilty of a common assault; but if you are of opinion that he had the intent to do grievous bodily harm, you should find him guilty of the greater offence.'

When the jury found a verdict of common assault, history is silent as to how it was received by the judge.

Maule was not disliked by the abler members of the Bar who appeared before him; but he was very impatient of anything like incompetence, or the assumption of ability not possessed. 'I wish you would put your facts in some kind of order,' he said to a confused and ill-prepared counsel. 'Chronological order is one way and perhaps the best, but I am not particular; any order you like—alphabetical order if you prefer it.'

Again, on circuit, a young counsel of great pretensions and

high connection, who was prosecuting a thief, displayed, as Maule thought, a pompous and offensive manner which required that the conceit should be taken out of him. This, to Maule, was of far more immediate importance than the conviction of the guilty thief. Maule sat silent watching his young victim until the end of the case.

'Have you no more witnesses to call, sir?' asked the judge.

'No, my lord,' replied counsel, in a tone that suggested that his lordship could see that for himself.

'Then your case is closed?' asked Maule.

'Certainly, my lord,' replied the counsel somewhat puzzled and indignant at the judge asking him again.

'Then, gentlemen of the jury,' said Maule, turning round to them with a malicious cough, 'you have only to acquit the prisoner, as no evidence has been given of the property in the article alleged to be stolen, and for aught that appears it might be the prisoner's own.'

But though he would allow the acquittal of a guilty prisoner, for the purpose of punishing the incompetence of an offensive counsel, he was not always so harsh in his methods. Hawkins has a story of two young attorneys' clerks fighting in chambers before Maule, who promptly decided against one of them. Thereupon, as the unsuccessful one was leaving the room, he called Maule a 'damned old fool.' The shocked door-keeper reported the matter to the judge, who ordered the boy to be brought back. Looking over his desk at the pale and trembling clerk, he read him the following kindly rebuke: 'I understand that in passing out of these chambers you called me "a damned old fool." I don't say you are wrong, my boy, for a moment; you may be right. I may be a damned old fool, but it would have been more polite if you had deferred the expression of your opinion until you were outside. You may now go.'

In merrier vein was his reply to Alderson, the criminal counsel who, when defending a prisoner, had wound up an eloquent address to the jury by declaring that his client was the victim of 'a shameful, an infamous, I may say, a diabolical prosecution!'

'Gentlemen of the jury,' began Maule in a thin dry voice, 'you are told that this is a diabolical prosecution; but, gentlemen, it is my duty to direct you that you must give the devil his due, and that can only be done by finding the defendant guilty.' Then followed a cogent summing up, ending, as the judge desired, in a verdict of guilty.

It is never very wise to remind a judge that he has omitted this, that, or the other point, in his summing up. There is a good deal of original sin in the judicial person, and he often takes advantage of such an application by counsel to rub into the minds of the jury other matters that counsel by no means desired to call attention to. Maule was a very dangerous person to interfere with, and few counsel dared to do it. One more foolhardy than others was defending a Bible reader and Sunday-school teacher charged with a serious offence. A lot of evidence had been called to the man's character, but the direct evidence was overwhelming, and Maule summed up for a conviction.

At the conclusion of this, counsel for the prisoner jumped up and said: 'I crave your lordship's pardon, but you have not referred to the prisoner's good character as proved by a number of witnesses.'

'You are right, sir,' said his lordship; and then addressing the jury he continued: 'Gentlemen, I am requested to draw your attention to the prisoner's character, which has been spoken to by gentlemen I doubt not of the greatest respectability and veracity. If you believe them and also the witnesses for the prosecution it appears to me that they have established what to many persons may be incredible—namely, that even a man of piety and virtue occupying the position of Bible reader and Sunday-school teacher may be guilty of committing a heinous and grossly immoral crime.'

To the defender of prisoners there is a mine of wisdom in the homely adage—'Let well alone.'

Maule had always the ready word for any display of conceit or impertinence. To an absurd liar who burst out in the witness-box, 'My lord, you may believe me or not, but I have stated not a word that is false, for I have been wedded to truth from infancy.'

'Very likely,' replied the judge promptly and sternly; 'but the question is how long you have been a widower.'

The witness who will not speak up in the box and let everyone hear what he has to say is an abomination of desolation, standing where he ought not. Maule, like every other judge, very properly loathed and detested him. 'Witness!' he called out to one of these offenders, 'for the sake of God and your expenses, do speak out, man!' And to another mumblor he spoke in warning tones: 'Witness! if you do not speak louder, I shall have to teach you the difference between *Aloud* and *Disallowed*.'

Verbal puns and quips were not, however, Maule's speciality.

I have heard it related of him that to a counsel who could not sound an *h*, and who referred constantly to an official as an 'igh bailiff,' Maule put the following question: 'This official is quite unknown to me. I have never heard of an eye bailiff. I have heard of a bum bailiff. What is it you mean?' I do not vouch for the truth of this story, which is also told of Baron Alderson and others.

Mock ceremony and exaggerated politeness in absurd circumstances seemed to give him vast pleasure. At Derby, once, when Maule was sentencing a prisoner, the governor of the gaol happened to pass between the prisoner in the dock and the judge, in order to hand a calendar to counsel. Maule thereupon called on the governor to stand up, and solemnly rebuked him. 'Surely, sir, you know that you ought never to pass between two gentlemen when one gentleman is addressing the other.' When the governor had apologised the judge gave the prisoner seven years.

One witty decision of his is still good law, and is I believe followed by officials of Assize Courts. One of a jury locked up to consider their verdict, sent out for a glass of water, and the officer inquired of the judge whether the request might be granted. 'Well, sir,' said Maule, 'you are sworn to keep the jury without meat, drink, or fire. Now water is not fire; water is not meat; and I should certainly hold that water is not drink, so let the fellow have a glass.'

Maule showed no great kindness to the pretensions of the clergy, who probably often irritated him by their conceit of manner. Still, the terrible story told by Mr. Justice Hawkins of his amusing himself at the expense of a cleric whilst a wretched prisoner was being tried for his life is wholly inexcusable even if it has moments of delicious irony that make one almost forget its surroundings.

A man had murdered his wife. The vicar of his parish was called as to character. The defence was insanity, in which Maule did not greatly believe.

The vicar gave evidence that he had been a regular attendant at church until, without any apparent reason, he became a sabbath-breaker, and after that the murder took place.

Maule then had a few words with the witness.

'You say you have been vicar of this parish for four-and-thirty years.'

'Yes, my lord.'

'And during that time I dare say you have regularly performed the services of the Church.'

'Yes, my lord.'

'Did you have week-day services as well?'

'Every Tuesday, my lord.'

'And did you preach your own sermons?'

'With an occasional homily of the Church.'

'Your own sermon or discourse with an occasional homily. And was this poor man a regular attendant at all your services during the whole time you have been vicar?'

'Until he killed his wife, my lord.'

'That follows. I mean up to the time of this sabbath-breaking you spoke of. He regularly attended your ministrations and then killed his wife.'

'Exactly, my lord.'

'Never missed the sermon, discourse, or homily of the Church, Sunday or week-day?'

'That is so, my lord.'

'Did you write your own sermons, may I ask?'

'Oh yes, my lord.'

Maule now made some calculations, and after a few words of mock courtesy to the parson read out the following results to Hawkins, who at the first thought all this interest in the vicar and his sermons looked well for the plea of insanity.

'This gentleman, Mr. Hawkins, has written with his own pen and preached or read with his own voice to this unhappy prisoner one hundred and four Sunday sermons or discourses, with an occasional homily every year. These, added to the week-day service, make exactly one hundred and fifty-six sermons, discourses, and homilies for the year. These, again, being continued for a space of time comprising, as the reverend gentleman tells us, no less than thirty-four years, give us a grand total of five thousand three hundred and four sermons, discourses, or homilies during this unhappy man's life. Five thousand and three hundred and four,' he repeated, gazing sternly at the vicar, 'by the same person, however respectable and beloved as a pastor he might be, was what few of us could have gone through unless we were endowed with as much strength of mind as power of endurance.'

'I was going to ask you, sir, did the idea ever strike you, when you talked of this unhappy being suddenly leaving your ministration and becoming a sabbath-breaker, that after thirty-four years he might want a little change? Would it not be reasonable to suppose that the man might think he had had enough of it?'

'It might, my lord.'

'And would not that in your judgment, instead of showing that he was insane, prove that he was a *very sensible man* ?'

In spite of all this witty fooling, Hawkins was successful in his plea with the jury.

It is curious how Maule's desire to score off clerics crops up in the strangest places. In the great case of Lady Hewley's charities, where a question arose as to whether 'Godly preachers' included clergymen of the Church of England, Maule gave a very learned judicial opinion against their claim in the following words : 'It is true clergymen of the Church of England may and do preach the Gospel, but that is not their sole or most distinguishing function'; and when "preachers of the Gospel" are spoken of as a class, the clergy conforming to the Established Church are not, according to the ordinary use of language, comprehended.'

No doubt this is sound in law and fact, but it might have been stated with greater regard for the feelings of the clergy.

One of the best known Maule stories throws some light on his attitude towards current beliefs.

A little girl was in the witness-box, and, as is usual, before she was allowed to be sworn, she was examined by the judge as to her understanding the nature of an oath, and her belief in a future state.

'Do you know what an oath is, my child ?' said Maule.

'Yes, sir, I am obliged to tell the truth.'

'And, if you do always tell the truth, where will you go to when you die ?'

'Up to heaven, sir.'

'And what will become of you if you tell lies ?'

'I shall go down to the naughty place, sir.'

'Are you quite sure of that ?'

'Yes, sir, quite sure.'

'Let her be sworn,' said Maule. 'It is quite clear she knows a great deal more than I do.'

It seems a pity we have so few of Maule's recorded good sayings before he went to the Bench. He seems to have had a huge contempt for the generation of judges before whom he practised. When Mr. Justice Taunton rudely and irritably told him he was arguing like a child he replied very sweetly : 'I am well contented to be likened to a child, for a child if spared becomes in process of time a man ; but once a bear, my lord, always a brute.'

His famous saying to Bayley on the Midland Circuit has always been regarded by the junior Bar as an authoritative decision in favour of malt liquor. Bayley was drinking claret when Maule reproved him, shouting out to him 'Claret be damned! Why don't you drink common porter and bring your understanding down to a level with the judges?'

Many Maule stories are not recorded at all, but only handed down to us by the oral traditions that still linger over the Circuit wine on a winter night when two or three are gathered together and try to recall the glorious memories of forgotten days. Of such is the tale of the threatening letters. The case was one of great local interest, and on the morning of the second day the learned serjeant on one side made grave complaint that he and his client had received disgusting threatening letters. Up jumped the learned serjeant on the other side with a similar complaint.

'Brothers,' said Maule blandly holding up his hand for silence. 'Brothers, I too have received threatening letters concerning this case, of a very abominable character; but it would ill befit me sitting on this Bench to say what I did with those letters sitting in another place.'

When one has read and recalled all the witty ironies and clever mockage of this strange character one is bound to admit that as far as records tell he was probably the greatest wit on the English Bench. Also it is fair to his memory to say that he did not make the numberless puny idle jests that some judicial humourists have been guilty of, and he tempered his humour with wisdom. In at least one case, the address to Hall the bigamist, his irony worked great public service; but even this does not convince one that irony and wit are, properly speaking, judicial qualities. One reason why a judicial humourist is in danger of disaster is that whatever the quality of his gift it is bound by the altitude of his position to be received with a louder approbation than it deserves by its compulsory audience. *Non aliter* of schoolmasters. This in general is detrimental to its quality and aggravating to its quantity. One good word at least may be said about Maule, that he had a real rich gift of irony and always gave his hearers the best that was in him. There is no evidence that he ever played to the gallery. The reasons for and against admiration of his gift of irony are probably summed up in the phrase that he 'couldn't help it.' That is the only real excuse for irony.

THE VILLAGE POSTMISTRESS.

HER name was Martha, Martha Tredgold, and indeed in her sterling worth of character she was pure gold. But like her, (dare we say ?) more illustrious namesake of Bethany, she was 'cumbered about much serving'—indeed, at such busy times as Christmas, very much cumbered about very much serving of postage stamps to our village rustics, anxious to despatch the season's greetings to distant relatives and friends—daughters in service and sons abroad or at the regimental depot, to say nothing of lovers, male and female. But though 'careful and troubled about many things,' our Martha did not neglect the 'one thing needful.' She was the staunchest of churchwomen, and her great influence was always thrown on the side of village rectitude. And indeed, if she had not been 'careful and troubled about many things' postal, she would soon have brought very real 'trouble' upon herself from her official superiors at A. For even the esteem in which she was justly held there for her long and faithful services did not save her from the occasional receipt of ominous blue papers which began with the printed formula—'You are required to furnish this office with an immediate, complete, and succinct explanation of . . .' The alleged delinquency was couched in such stilted language that it reduced poor Martha, even though she had been educated at a 'Ladies' College' in the Isle of Wight, to a state of hopeless bewilderment. It was on such occasions that she honoured me, though only the curate, by the request to act as interpreter of these official documents. 'The rector, sir, he be too learned to make it plain to simple folk, but you, sir, do make it all clear like to me.' This was the left-handed thanks I received for my pains in breaking up the official synthetic into the popular analytic, understood of the people.

Our Postmistress' attitude towards these official inquiries, however much they caused her to quake inwardly, was that of a brave soul with a *mens conscia recti* in spite of rare and trivial lapses from the ideal of official perfection. She 'bore herself with dauntless air.'

'When I be wrong, sir,' she declared to me on one occasion, 'I will humble myself to a beggar. But when I be in the right, I humbles myself to no one; not even to my Mistress'—for so she always spoke of her late most gracious Majesty, Queen Victoria.

There are hours in the twenty-four which appeal to the thoughtful mind with their own special significance: the zenith with its major chord of noonday splendour, the witching hour of midnight with its solemn minor chord. But in our village of 'The-Market-place-with-the-long-ford,' to translate its Saxon name into modern English, the hour of the day which dwarfed all others into insignificance was that of 6 P.M., when the mail-bag of our village was solemnly, with due and appropriate ritual, sealed up, before being deposited in the mail-van waiting to convey it on its thirty-mile journey to A. by the lonely road which skirts our South-West Wilts downs.

There stood the high priestess of the postal Hermes, with tongue extended—the truth must be told to recall accurately the solemn scene—ready at the psychological moment to lubricate the large engraved crown with which she sealed down the mail-bag the moment her grandfather clock, in its wonderfully carved oak case, struck the hour. Woe to procrastination, that thief of time! Woe to neglected opportunity! Any belated letter must now undergo a redeeming purgatory of twenty-four hours before it can speed to its destination. The mournful cadence of Tennyson's tragic song sprang irresistibly to the mind—'Too late, too late; ye cannot enter now.' Only once during the long years of her reign, and only then for the old rector, and only even for him since his letter bore the address, 'To H.R.H. the Duke of —,' was the bag re-opened after that solemn sealing. And the hearts of those of us who stood round beat with quickened pulses as we realised that history was being made as we looked on.

Some attempt at a description of Martha's appearance, as we recall her, must be made. Above middle height, still erect, quick and active, but withal dignified in carriage; with fine, hooked nose and resolute mouth and chin, redeemed from undue severity by the merry, kindly blue eyes. In winter she wore a simple stuff gown with knitted spencer. In damp, muddy weather she was one of the few who still used pattens. In summer her print dresses were always of the daintiest pattern and spotlessly clean, while a delightful sun-bonnet completed the whole costume. There was no stupid aping the fashions of the gentry about Martha, yet there were few ladies who presented a more gracious picture.

The Post Office cottage stood, as was fitting, at the head of the village and was placed, as was fitting also, a little back from the vulgar line of the village street, in dignified seclusion and reserve,

emblematic of the official aloofness which characterised the Postmistress herself. The cottage was probably built about 1625, with several other houses in the village, in the characteristic chequer-work with local material found so readily in down countries. The alternate squares of faced flint and chalk—the latter weathered and hardened into stone and wisely built into the walls in the same horizontal position in which it formerly lay in the quarry bed—had a peculiar charm of their own. The lower windows had fine old mullions, quite graceful in their severe simplicity. In the roof were two semi-dormer windows. The thick thatch encircling them seemed to suggest some dear old face peeping out of one of Martha's own deep sun-bonnets. Gentle reader! nurtured in some palace, you cannot have known, as the writer has by actual experience, the comfort of living under thatch. In the summer heat how cool it is; and then in the winter cold how snug! Of all decaying arts, surely that of the village thatcher is most to be regretted. A well-thatched roof proved, as few other pieces of rustic handiwork, how straight an eye and how artistic a mind the rustic may possess. How proud the older generation of thatchers were of their roofs, and of the charming edging made with the crossed wooden 'spars'!

The Post Office was perched on the side of a hill that led up to the downs above the village, so steep that as you entered from the back you stepped down one deep step into the outer office, where the wants of the commonalty were supplied, and two more equally deep into the inner sitting-room, where the Postmistress executed the orders of the gentry, privileged with the entrée.

One cannot help feeling that a volume of photographs of village post offices taken forty years ago, or even later, would have revealed some of the quaintest and most picturesque cottages imaginable; and what a striking contrast would these tiny capillaries have made to the great pulsing heart of the G.P.O. at St. Martin le Grand!

Writers on Scottish rural life have described how very intimate friends come to be called 'far ben.' Of the two rooms that comprise the ground floor of a highland cottage the outer one is called the 'but.' It is here where all the common work of the house is carried on, and business with the daily callers, pedlars and others, transacted. The inner room is called the 'ben.' Into it only the more familiar friends are invited, and the most intimate of them are described as being 'far ben.'

Certainly the 'ben' of our Postmistress was reserved exclusively for the gentry—and even they waited for the coveted invitation—

and for a very few intimates among the superior villagers. My successor in the curacy, after I had been preferred to a neighbouring rectory, either in ignorance of or lightly esteeming such niceties, on his first visit to the Post Office, boldly and uninvited, stepped through the outer office into the inner shrine and demanded stamps. 'If you will please step into the office, sir, it will be my humble duty to supply you.' The words were quite simple, but the severity of the rebuke lay in the tone of offended dignity with which they were spoken.

What a delightful room that 'ben' was! The newest article of furniture well over a hundred years old, and many older still. How it satisfied one's artistic instincts better in its severe simplicity than many a wealthy drawing-room, crowded with its senseless bric-à-brac! How nearly such cottage interiors approximate to Morris's canon of art, that a house should contain nothing that has not some definite use, and that every useful thing, even the humblest, can possess real beauty of design, though it be something quite inexpensive and simple.

The space between the front of the cottage and the village street was merely flagged. Others, more leisured or more sentimental, would probably have turned the little plot into a flower border, stocked with the herbaceous favourites of the village. But there was little room for either leisure or sentiment in busy Martha's strenuous life. For, as well as Postmistress, she was village laundress. This does not mean, however, that she washed indiscriminately for all. Her proud boast was of a dual nature:—there were no gentry she did not, nor any 'simple' that she did, wash for. In these degenerate days it is, I believe, an easy matter for all and sundry to secure a record in 'The County Families.' But Martha's laundry list was as exclusive and as exact as any 'Almanach de Gotha.' Many and fruitless were the attempts of those whose social position in the neighbourhood was uncertain to secure the hall-mark of admission into Martha's exclusive *clientèle*.

There is a tradition that once, in the early days of the *nouveaux riches*, a wealthy, vulgar family, who had taken an old place in the neighbourhood, sent several large hampers to Martha as a matter of course without previous inquiry, but with the curt message that the articles were to be returned clean and promptly. I cannot say they were returned clean, but there can be no question about the promptness of the return—within half an hour, to be exact, and 'with Martha Tredgold's humble duty, but she only washed gentry.'

This elliptical description of her profession proved embarrassing at times, and made me cautious as to taking the younger and unmarried of our lady visitors to be introduced to Mrs. Tredgold. On such occasions, after the introduction had been acknowledged by one of her inimitably graceful curtsies, Martha (none of us would have dared to address her thus familiarly!) would refer to her professional connection with me. 'Yes, madam, I have washed the gentleman for nearly twenty years and kept him sweet and clean.' At this point I always trembled with alarm lest she might bid me exhibit the more easily approached and less intimate portions of my underclothing to demonstrate the truth of her statement. Fortunately it never occurred to her that any assertion of hers could possibly be questioned, and so I escaped.

Once when I visited her, I found her greatly perturbed. Some of the more up-to-date young ladies of her *clientèle* had adopted a garment which in one combines the usefulness of two—further definition I hope is unnecessary. 'Condemnations they do call them, sir, heathen garments say I, not fit for Christian gentry.' It would have only shocked her the more to point out that heathen garments are often in their negative quality still less orthodox.

But indeed Martha's sumptuary laws were drastic and were rigorously enforced. Her younger lady clients, married and single, were permitted frilled and embroidered under-garments. But after the fiftieth birthday it was Martha's invariable rule that these should be discarded for something simpler and less ornate.

She sometimes called me in—reluctant and embarrassed—as a sort of clerical assessor to give ecclesiastical sanction and support to her decrees and sentences, and on one occasion to inspect, as casually as she would permit, the offending garments of a specially flagrant transgressor.

This elderly devotee of fashion, not possessing what to the Apostolic mind is of 'great price' and far more precious than any quantity of embroidery, 'even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit,' flared up into open rebellion, and attempted to organise a boycott against the autocratic Martha. But these were the days before universal steam-laundries, and Martha knew, and we knew, that there was no one within a radius of twenty miles who could even remotely approach her unique skill in her profession. And the end of this one and only rebellion was an abject surrender, in almost literal sackcloth, on the part of the offender.

So Martha triumphed in the matter of a reform that has proved

too hard for the strongest governments in both ancient and modern times.

The delivery of the letters in our Postmistress's hands was not a mere commonplace happening in the daily round of life, but rather a solemn ceremony conducted with a nice regard for the fitness of things social.

It is reported of a punctilious duke of the old *noblesse* that, in helping the guests at his table, he was accustomed to mark with scrupulous care the varying rank of those he entertained. To a fellow duke he would say, 'Monsieur le Duc, may I have the honour of helping you to some beef?' To a nobleman of lower rank it was, 'Monsieur le Marquis, or Monsieur le Baron, may I have the pleasure——?' Of an ordinary gentleman, he would, as he smartly tapped the joint with his knife, merely ask, 'Beef, Monsieur?'

So with our Postmistress on her daily morning round. If I, as one of her laundry clients, chanced to be on my door-step when she called, she would present my letters to me with a curtsy and 'Your letters, sir, with my humble duty.' If one of the servants received them, they were delivered with 'Your master's letters.' In the case of the villagers, a letter was simply handed over in silence, broken only by the 'Thank you, Mrs. Treggol,' which even the most daringly up-to-date in off-hand pertness of manner never ventured to omit. Somehow, as we received even our halfpenny circulars from her hands, they took on an added importance.

It was one of the events of the week to watch Martha march down the village street on her way to the Sunday evening service in church. On these occasions she condescended to mix with her fellow villagers in a spirit of tempered reserve and restrained affability. But everyone recognised that it was for the Postmistress first to address the recipients of her gracious notice, and for her to select, as do royal personages, the topics of conversation.

But on occasions of national rejoicing, such as jubilees and coronations, celebrated by a special service in church, this pleasing, condescending familiarity was replaced by a demeanour of regal aloofness and majesty of which the Kaiser is said to be such a master. A fitting ceremonial was strictly observed. The Postmistress, clad from head to foot in royal purple—purple silk dress, purple velvet mantilla, and purple feathered bonnet—made her solemn progress down the middle of the village street. Did ever the august centre of a royal procession look more regal? Did our Postmistress for a moment forget that she was the official

representative of Majesty itself? Gone now was that easy affability of ordinary Sundays! But Martha was no Erastian, and if loyalty to the State and its exalted Head compelled her to esteem the Post Office as the village Quirinal, as a good churchwoman she regarded the Rectory as the Vatican. Whichever of us happened to preach the sermon on such occasions of State rejoicings never neglected to point out that the greatness of our Empire 'on which the sun never sets' had been built up and is maintained by such faithful services as those of our village Postmistress, and how highly favoured we were in having so noble and inspiring an example of loyalty to duty living in our midst.

Even Fate, when it visited our Postmistress with misfortune, did so in a manner that served to emphasise her connection with Royalty, and thus robbed the untoward event of half its bitterness. For example, at the time of the postponement of the late King Edward's coronation, Martha's pig was suddenly seized with severe illness. 'Mortal bad he be with the King's complaint!' Such was the startling diagnosis of our village vet., who pursued his professional duties in the intervals of his humbler work as blacksmith. If he were not entitled to add the magic letters M.R.C.V.S. to his name, yet he had worked for six months as shoeing-smith to a vet., and during that time had 'cleaned all his 'natomies.' He was wont to impress his rustic hearers at the village tavern by such profound information as that 'the inside of a horse crosses hisself twice,' while that of 'a cow don't cross hisself at all,' and that 'a pig and a Christian be made zactly same, inside'—this latter a humbling reflection! On one occasion he achieved a triumph in pastoral work, the envy of the clergy round, by keeping almost the entire population of the village diligently searching their Bibles the whole of the winter months by the simple expedient of offering £5 to the first person who discovered a certain text, which he afterwards admitted was not in the Bible at all.

To the nation's joy, the King recovered, while Martha's pig died. But it was the same complaint in the case of the King and of the pig, and we all felt that a special and peculiar intimacy with royalty had been conferred by Fate on our Postmistress, and, through her, on the whole parish. Could it be wondered at that she held herself proudly and with ever-increasing dignity?

But our Martha was no Diotrefes, intoxicated with the love of pre-eminence. Her high appreciation of herself and her appoint-

ment only served to incite her to a more faithful and scrupulous discharge of her duties, while her courtesy to simple as well as gentle was genuine and unfailing, and without a shadow of conceit or condescension.

The time has come for us now to glance at Martha's *affaires de cœur*, and briefly to describe her courtship and marriage. There was one incident in her early life which, if the truth must be told, shall be referred to with all possible delicacy and reserve. Though the parish 'Register of Marriages' describes Martha as a 'spinster,' 'of full age'—thus considerably were her sixty-six summers recorded—the fact remains that one of her bridesmaids and bearers of her purple train was her own granddaughter. It must not be hastily assumed that this very concrete evidence of lapsed virtue gave her husband any initial advantage in the matrimonial partnership, since the other bridesmaid and train-bearer was his grandchild, though the Register in his case also described him as being technically unmarried.

But that momentous change wrought out at Amesbury, only a few miles distant, by which Guinevere the sinner became first Guinevere the penitent and then Guinevere the saint, was not, thank God, a unique event, but is daily repeated. And the only effect of Martha Melior's youthful indiscretion was a stern hatred of, and loathing for, anything that was not nice, and a restoring tenderness of manner towards the fallen.

What was it that induced Martha, so self-reliant and so unsentimental, to embark, at her mature age, on the uncertain sea of holy matrimony? Was it that, like the great Alexander, she longed for more worlds to conquer, and felt that the subjugation of a lord of creation was a task worthy of her powers and well within them? I cannot say. It was a mystery beyond our comprehension. Possibly the explanation lay in the fact that she had had for some time previously a succession of most unsatisfactory rural postmen, and she felt that a masterly and permanent solution of the difficulty could be found in combining the offices of husband and rural postman in one person.

With her lover Daniel the compelling motive was much more obvious. After a hard and precarious life as a country carrier, he had come to the conclusion—a very mistaken one, as we shall see—that he could secure for himself as the spouse of the industrious Martha a comfortable home, an easy life, and, if he were lucky enough to survive her, a considerable fortune. Neither of the

two was fitted by age or temperament for the love-sick dalliance of an ordinary engagement. Indeed, that engagement much more closely resembled what in wrestling contests is, I believe, described as 'manœuvring for grip.'

Most dear to Daniel's heart were his pipe and his glass of ale, and he was resolved that, if possible, they should be the luxury of his married life, as they had been the consolation of his bachelor days. Martha was resolved that both should be renounced. It was here where the manœuvring for grip came in. Martha was quite aware of Daniel's tastes, though she kept her knowledge to herself, while Daniel had never ventured to indulge either in her presence or even to mention them. And their courting consisted, on Daniel's side, in trying to awaken some softer moment in Martha when he could successfully obtain the permission he desired, while on Martha's side was the resolution to give him no such opportunity. Things had come to rather an *impasse* when one evening Martha cut the Gordian knot by exclaiming, 'Dan'l, ye don't ever smoke and ye don't ever drink; come to me heart.' And Dan'l came!

It was then that our Postmistress gave her accepted consort's squat figure a sharp, critical look, as if she were literally taking his measure. For a moment Daniel was half puzzled, half flattered, and then the matter passed from his mind. Nor did he think any more of it when a parcel was delivered to his future bride, a few days after, as he sat in the front office, endeavouring to assume as cheerful an air as possible in the absence of his accustomed pipe and glass. A sly, enigmatical smile flitted across Martha's face as she carefully carried the parcel to her wardrobe above.

It must be owned that Martha practically proposed to Daniel. But did not her august Mistress and pattern in all things do the same when she signified to the Prince Albert that her gracious choice had fallen upon him?

Any description of the marriage ceremony itself is unnecessary, though two incidents in the service may be referred to. First, it was noticed that the old rector slurred over the word 'obey' in the question addressed to the bride and to which she is instructed to answer 'I will.' And secondly, he omitted altogether the address which the Prayer Book provides 'if there be no sermon, declaring the duties of man and wife.' It was one thing for St. Paul, from the security of his Roman prison, to command 'wives to be subject to their husbands in all things.' It was quite another, and a much more adventurous matter, to address such words, even

indirectly and impersonally, to the imperious Martha. Nor could the wildest flight of imagination ever picture Martha, as needing the exhortation 'not to be afraid with any amazement' of anything that matrimony might have in store for her.

We have attempted to illustrate how Martha's Christian name was symbolic and descriptive of her busy, active, capable life. Her husband's case also was one of *nomen et omen*, but, alas, *infelix*! Sharp as was the trial of his great Hebrew namesake in being cast for a single night into a den of several lions, our Daniel's trial was in some respects more nerve-shattering, since he voluntarily for the rest of his life elected to take up his abode in the home of a lioness, terrible in her wrath when provoked. Had Daniel been a Hebrew scholar he would have known that the name Martha is connected with Mara, 'bitterness,' or 'that which can be bitter,' and so might have taken warning in time from a lot which proved that it could be bitter indeed.

Certainly Martha hung upon his arm as they walked up the village street on their return from church to the Post Office, but his bride's first words must have been a revelation of what was in store for him. 'Treggol,' she said,—the more intimate Dan'l was now dropped for the more official 'Treggol'—'I hereby appoint you rural postman to this office. You will find your uniform on your bed; get it on and be ready for your round in half-an-hour. Mind that as Postmistress I be your master, and it will be my duty to report any misconduct on your part to the Postmaster at A.' And never once during the fourteen years of their married life did Martha step from her proud pinnacle of Postmistress down to the meaner level of a mere wife. Had her gracious Mistress ever forgotten that as Queen her consort was her subject?

Alas, how poor Daniel's alluring visions of ease and comfort were transformed into grim certainties of labour and sorrow! That uniform meant for him a five-mile tramp night and morning over lonely roads, bleak and exposed in winter, hot and dusty in summer. The bitterness of these daily journeys was accentuated by the reflection that in the four 'publics' which he passed night and morning there were seated former cronies, each with his pipe and glass before him.

Past these attractive haunts of former days, where 'he saw the light of household fire gleam warm and bright,' he had to bear, not 'a banner with a strange device,' but a heavy mail-bag, 'and from his lips escaped' many 'a groan.' His only comfort was, and

he recounted it with special pride, that for anyone who assaulted him wearing Her Majesty's uniform there awaited 'double penalty.'

So for fourteen years Daniel trudged his weary round, as well as pumping up and carrying innumerable buckets of fresh spring water for use in Martha's laundry, until, one severe winter, his probation was ended by an acute attack of bronchitis.

But, if the truth must be told, he does not deserve any great excess of pity for his lot. If ever a man framed to play the part of a despotic tyrant of a husband to some timid wife, that man was Daniel Tredgold, and fate for once made no mistake in her matrimonial selection.

A few days after the funeral I walked over to the Post Office to offer to the widowed Postmistress my sympathy and condolences. 'Poor Tredgold—' I began, but the conventional expression was frozen on my lips by the look of reproach she gave me, and which at once convinced me of my *faux pas*, leaving little need for the reproof that followed.

'I fed him and clothed him, sir, and gave him a good home here below, and if Them Above can make him half so comfortable'—her tone clearly intimated how remote she considered the possibility—'if Them Above can make him half so comfortable as I did, he will not take much harm, nor need to be called "Poor Tredgold."'

Only once did Martha's shrewd common sense fail her. A knock came to her door one day. 'Madam,' said the stranger, 'do not speak. Pray tell me nothing. I understand exactly what you feel and suffer.' And he proceeded to reel off the more obvious symptoms of dyspepsia, of which complaint Martha's face bore evident traces to even the casual observer. 'It is fortunate that I have called upon you,' he continued, 'since I have explored the dense forests of South America for some years, seeking the very herbs and roots which are a specific for your special illness. To you, as one of her Majesty's officials, the price is reduced to half-a-guinea a box.' For his own sake this American explorer was wise in never again visiting the lioness in her den with pills composed of brown bread.

Soon after we had celebrated her eighty-ninth birthday we began sorrowfully to realise that another and more august visitor would soon knock at Martha's door. But the King of Terrors had few terrors for her brave heart. Her only anxiety was that she might meet him with fitting dignity, and it was with solemn pride that she showed me the fine old linen nightdress and cap.

both beautifully worked by her own hand, which were to form the final robes for her mortal frame.

Her great wish had been that her dear old rector should hold her right hand, while I should hold her left, at her passing. But when that moment came the old rector had himself preceded her, and I happened to be ill. She sent me kindly messages, and insisted on my accepting the beautiful old china jug, which I had previously declined as too valuable, for a wedding present.

A little while before I had visited her when she was very feeble, but still able to be about and with some effort to seal the mail-bag each night. She had just been greatly comforted by a visit from a sister-in-law of the rector's, a very old friend and deservedly beloved by the whole parish. 'She knelt just there, sir,' and she pointed as if to some sacred spot, 'and she prayed so beautifully for me, and spoke of me, simple though I be, in her prayer as her "dear sister." Think of that, sir, from a lady born,' and the dear old creature burst into tears.

I had expected that her last words would have had some reference to her life's work, or to the gracious Sovereign she had served so faithfully as Postmistress for over half a century. But she died with the name on her lips of her beloved grandchild, who had nursed her with tender devotion, 'Alice, Alice.'

Only a grassy mound indicates where that brave and faithful body lies in the village churchyard.

I once saw, in a beautiful churchyard in Somerset, what I would fain see in every churchyard in our land. There were memorials, graceful and appropriate in design, bearing names well known to fame in art and science. And with them there were mounds lacking any record of the simple folk who lay beneath. But on a slight eminence in the centre of that God's acre there had been raised a cross, taller and richer than all, bearing an inscription as beautiful as itself. 'To the glory of God, and to the memory of those, His faithful servants, who lie in unrecorded graves around. "And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels."' "

CHARLES S. EARLE.

A NEWSPAPER IN TIME OF WAR.

BY AN EDITOR.

On the day when Germany declared war on Russia and started to invade France by way of Luxembourg and Belgium, I had just arrived at a pleasing spot on the south coast of England, hundreds of miles from my editorial chair. This was the result of a neglect of duty gravely reprehensible, but not perhaps wholly void of excuse.

During the closing weeks of July we had all been passionately discussing the wrongs of a far-off land called Ulster, threatened with red warfare by a project which the students of political history may still remember under the name of Home Rule. But it did not occur to any of us that the troubles of Ulster could for a moment compete in interest with the arrangements for our summer holidays. It was not till July 28 that I really felt alarmed for the safety of that inviolable month, free from leading articles, news, and catching special trains with editions not less special, of which the prospect makes life just bearable during the rest of the year.

On July 28 was announced Austria's declaration of a 'punitive expedition' against Serbia, and that day was also to me of the first importance as marking my start for a motor trip to the south of England. Austria's declaration meant that the betting was ten to one in favour of a general European war within a week, and anyone but a callous newspaper editor would have cancelled his longed for trip and reseated himself proudly in the chair of duty. But twenty years have hardened me. During that time the country and I have three times been—according to private Foreign Office warnings—within twenty-four hours of a European war (once with France, and twice with Germany), and more times than I can count we have together been through crises of 'grave importance.' After all my motor trip would only keep me on the road for three days, and there were plenty of telegraph and telephone offices all the way. And then the deluge! I could come back with my trip wrung hardly from the hands of fate. So off I went and enjoyed myself hugely, not a misfire all the way and no tyre troubles—stolen pleasures are always the sweetest. This to explain how I came to be on the south coast of England when the war clouds burst over Europe.

On the day of my arrival at that pleasing spot by the sea—guarded by Territorials with fixed bayonets, a grand sight—the telegraph wires smoked with messages passing between me and my assistants in London, and at my head office far away. My absence had done them a world of good—thrown them on their own resources and stimulated their intelligences—but the tone of their messages lacked calmness. Still they had done very well, which was the main thing, and I was proud of them. Then, as soon as I could raise some money—which was not easy as the banks were all shut and even my credit was for the time at an end—I went up to London by train feeling that whatever happened that famous motor trip was something substantial to the good in my account with Providence.

Fleet Street is a strange place ; it never seems to learn anything. It can never get away from its central idea, which is that events happen in the wide world in order to be recorded in newspapers to the greater glory of editors and the greater profit of proprietors. I found Fleet Street buzzing with the tremendous arrangements which were being made for sending battalions of special war correspondents to the Front, with never a doubt as to whether any of them would be allowed to get there. As for a newspaper censorship, perish the thought. No one would dare seriously to interfere with the sacred right of the Press to give the palpitating public what it wanted. I do not claim to possess wisdom beyond that vouchsafed to my neighbours, but it has always been my habit—assisted by a good many years of absence from the self-conscious atmosphere of Fleet Street—to take a detached and rather unprofessional view of the relations between newspapers and the public. It was therefore very clear to me that in the crisis of August last the Press would play a very small and humble part, and that in the interests of the Common Good it would be severely sat upon. But Fleet Street had none of these depressing, almost disloyal, notions when I arrived in it and learned of Britain's ultimatum to Germany and the certainty of war within a few hours.

So the —— group were going to spend 50,000*l.* on an unequalled war service, and the ——, not to be left behind, had already arranged for sixteen war correspondents in France and Belgium. Thus spoke the chief of my London office, impressed but sceptical even as I. Would I share in with the —— in the expense of the sixteen gallant ones now packing for the Front? 'Yes,' said I, 'at the moderate price suggested, but it is stories we shall get, not news; there won't be any news.'

In the South African war there was a cable censorship at the Front, but no censorship at home, and Fleet Street had a great time. We used to despatch troops to the seat of war with bands playing and flags flying; we told the world exactly how many men and guns went in each ship, whence they sailed and whither they were bound. Were emergency divisions sent from India, we told the Boers and their European friends all about them, strength and ships and ports. Lord Roberts' plans for his advance on Bloemfontein would have been proclaimed to the enemy but for a tardy gleam of intelligence on the part of our rulers. There was no press censorship, but we were implored in the name of the gods which watch over the British Empire to lie low and not give away anything about Roberts. And to our credit—for we are really quite a patriotic lot when we are not thinking of how to go one better than our competitors—we did lie low over the details of Roberts's concentration. But it was a strain, the very devil of a strain.

The Russo-Japanese war and that in the Balkans should have opened the eyes of Fleet Street. Both these wars showed that no generals can allow their plans to be endangered, even to the smallest extent, by the indiscretions of the most discreet and most censored of newspaper correspondents at the Front. The most delightfully humorous incident in the grim war between Japan and Russia was the presence in the Gulf of Pechili of a newspaper steamer equipped with a wireless plant which impartially recorded the messages passing between the belligerent ships of both sides. My very good friend, the correspondent who organised that wireless vessel, closed his experiment without any illusions as to the future of his profession. After a polite intimation from both sides—by wireless—that they would sink him on sight, he felt constrained to abandon the cruise.

Fleet Street has not forgotten, though it did not at the time fully appreciate, the fate of its correspondence corps with the Bulgarians in the autumn of 1912. While a tremendous crowd of newspaper men, collected from Europe and America, were herded in a concentration camp fully fifty miles from the Front—and getting scraps of war news occasionally by way of London and Sofia—an Austrian officer, alleged never to have left the cafés of the Bulgarian capital, wrote dazzling descriptions of battles to his paper in Vienna, and the Press of the world copied them, not because it wanted to, but because it couldn't help it. When it was found that the gallant and ingenious Austrian had intimately described

two battles which never took place, his credit as a correspondent suffered, but the interned journalists in the Bulgarian concentration camp did not feel one whit the happier.

Remembering these things, I was absolutely sure that there was not going to be any free trade in news of the Great European war, that what we received of authentic information would be official and very little even of that, that no war correspondents would be allowed anywhere within sight or hearing of the fighting lines, and that the censorship at home on all news would be of the strictest. We all find our just level in this world sooner or later, and the level of newspapers in time of war is a very long way down in the scale of importance. Though my veins run with printer's ink, I must confess that when red blood is flowing printer's ink is of very small account.

My colleagues at the head office of my paper rejoiced to see me back. Their faces 'wore a worried look.' I had been absent for less than a week yet the iron of war had entered into their souls. Most men much prefer to obey orders than to give them, and my colleagues, good and true men, smiled almost gaily as they handed over the command to me. The organisation which I had built up in times of peace had come to a sudden and violent stop. Gone was the Stock Exchange and commercial news, gone was shipping (which the Censor at a very early stage put his foot upon), gone were our dear party political fights. The Lion of Ulster was lying down with the Lamb of Waterford, and Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Bonar Law had kissed each other. It was a strange new world to which I returned. And then an alarm spread. Was there going to be a paper famine? What about wood pulp from Norway and from Canada, what were the stocks in the country and when would new supplies arrive? The North Sea was a litter of mines and German cruisers were loose in the Atlantic; there was in fact the devil to pay! When I look back upon those early weeks of August they seem to be among the most delightful of my vagabond life. Nature, which had meant me to be a graceless tramp, gaily heedless of bed and board—actually I am a highly respectable father of a family and a justice of the peace—had at last a chance. Three times in my life I have cut myself loose from a safe anchorage and set out in my frail bark on the wild waves of Chance. But it has never been of any use; the bark has sailed trim and snug into another port and the skipper has been denied the adventures his soul craved. So it was to be again. For a week or two the making of a new paper under

the conditions of war, and the uncertainty as to where the materials were coming from to print it, were as delightful to me as that stolen motor trip, but they came almost as rapidly to an end. For the new paper, constructed on the ruins of the old one, was a Success, and the wood pulp rolled in until we had assured supplies for months ahead. Once more the bark had sailed into port.

My public wanted news of the war, of course, but more than anything else they wanted expression given to their inarticulate fury against Germany and Germany's Kaiser who had brought war into the midst of their comfortable peace. Day by day they craved for someone to do their cursing for them, artistically, philosophically, convincingly. I filled the bill; but what I should have done without Nietzsche, Treitschke, and Bernhardi I can form no conception. The mad philosopher, the deaf old professor of history, and the soldier-politician kept my readers happy for two months. Here proclaimed to the world was the whole Pan-German doctrine, and no apologist for Germany had a dog's chance against them. I owe to these three noble exponents of the Higher German Kultur a debt of gratitude which I never can repay.

Journalists should beware of encouraging in themselves a sense of humour. It hampers them in the exercise of their High Functions as Instructors of the Public. It would never have done, last August for example, for me to have asked myself what were my qualifications for dealing with problems of military strategy and grand tactics. Yet I believe that no lecturer at the Staff College could have served me and my public half so well as one of my ready newspaper writers fortified with Clausewitz and the military maxims of Napoleon. What Nietzsche, Treitschke, and Bernhardi were to the political side of my energetic output, Clausewitz and Napoleon were to the military side. During the early weeks of war they were a very present help in time of trouble.

But after all the public wants news, and no amount of profound discourses on the higher strategy, and of remorseless exposures of the German War Spirit, can take the place of authentic news from the Front. There comes a time when even Bernhardi fails to attract, and when Clausewitz does not throw much light upon 'fortress warfare' in trenches. At the beginning of the war we had news in great volume but of more than doubtful authenticity. Poor devastated little Belgium, eager for foreign sympathy and support, did not forbid to the war correspondent the run of his pen. So that while Belgium remained open there was plenty of news of a

sort, and we made the most of it. I am afraid that we kept the flag flying at Liège for fully a week after the Germans had battered the forts to pieces, and we certainly were not exacting in our use of the word 'Victory.' One of my friends about that time put to me a little Rule of Three sum which contained a moral for newspapers. 'If,' said he, 'five Belgian victories are followed by the German occupation of Brussels, how many victories will the Allies announce before the Germans take Paris?' It was a shrewd thrust. It is as difficult to prevent a writer of newspaper headlines from calling a temporary outpost success a 'victory' as it is to prevent him from calling every soldier or sailor a 'hero.'

We did not during the first two months of war suffer from the awful drought in printable news which set in when the numerous censors had learned something of their business, and war on land had become an affair of 'nibbling' at trenches. There was movement at the beginning and the possibility of dramatic surprises. But I sadly missed the fine irresponsible days of the South African war. Then, not a regiment or a ship but moved under a blaze of light and cheering crowds sweated themselves dry with enthusiasm. Now the Navy and the Army were mobilised, passed to their war stations, or were drafted into training camps, in stealthy silence. We did not get a descriptive line or a picture out of the whole Expeditionary Force, until long afterwards, when everyone wanted to know what had happened to it in France and not how it had crept out of England. But in one respect we were free from the gnawing anxiety of the common life in time of peace. Then we were always afraid of the other man with his low-class sheet beating our distinguished organ with a piece of really important news. Now we knew that we were all voyaging in the same isolated ship, on the same wide ocean, and that no one could get what was not also at the disposal of his neighbour and rival. An editor's life is much less harassing in these latter days of war.

Even in the South African war we never rose to the dazzling heights of patriotic publicity achieved by the American Press during their Spanish scrap. That Press proudly claims to have made the war, and when studying their newspapers at the time I was not prepared to deny the claim. They made the war, and they saw to it that there should be no failure of news about it. If there was not a sea or a land fight every day to serve up with the breakfast coffee, the Administration was called to book in the most truculent terms and told to hustle up its time-table. The fine full-blooded

Press which ran that Spanish-American war must regard its British colleagues, peacefully, almost uncomplainingly, herded within a barbed wire censorship, as a very white-livered lot. Martial law, which we are under for all practical purposes, with Lord Kitchener behind to see that it is firmly administered, has a wonderfully chastening effect even upon Fleet Street, and I should like to live long enough to see the American Press in similar fetters. This is not said vindictively, for it is much more amusing and interesting to run one's paper when the conditions are all adverse and one is thrown back upon the exercise of ingenuity. For my part I enjoy the censorship. It is, of course, very unintelligent—that is the source of its strength. The collective intelligence of a body of men, individually clever, is always very low, a psychological fact to which is due the success of Parliamentary Government in this country. As a race we would never endure to be governed by a man of genius—except maybe temporarily in time of supreme crisis. We tried the experiment once with Cromwell and replaced him by Charles II. and his corrupt ministers—a typically British sequence of choice. When this war is over we shall politely but very firmly shove Lord Kitchener out of the War Office and replace him by an Arnold-Forster. And we shall be right! The profoundest thing in our deep political instinct is its distrust of genius. We use it—occasionally—but we always hate it and distrust it. And we are right. Genius may win an Empire, but only honest stupidity can hold one.

My readers were utterly absorbed by the war. It had gripped them, shaken them to the bottom of their souls, and thrown them gasping on the bare earth. It was to them a vast convulsion of Nature against which it were as vain to protest as to pass paper resolutions against an earthquake. Where they could see any human figures standing out to be struck at—the German Kaiser, his ruthless officers, the alien enemy in our midst—they saw Red. There were pro-Boer newspapers during the South African war, but had any of our philosophic journalists dared to side with the Germans in August 1914 their papers would have been spat upon and trampled in the streets. Those were great days, to be lived through again and again in the retrospect. I smile now in writing of them, but I did not smile then.

The Russian invasion of Belgium was a great disappointment to me. There was a time when the accumulated evidence, absurd and contradictory as most of it was, grew to be so immense that I almost came to believe that train-loads of bearded Russians had

passed through this country on their way to Belgium. For me the legend began very early in August. I was informed by some shipping men that they had chartered several freight steamers to the Government for service between Archangel and this country. The nature of the service was not known. I do not doubt that this information was correct. Russia's communications through the Black Sea were very insecure owing to the German intrigues with Turkey, and her only safe outlet to the west at that time was through Archangel and the White Sea. Russia needed countless details of equipment, and could get them only from France or from us. I do not doubt that there was a large passing to and fro during the autumn of steamers trading with Archangel. From this small seed of truth sprang in one night the full grown tree of legend, trunk and branches, leaves and flowers. A day or two more and the tree had become a great forest of rumour and a whole nation—though the newspapers were silent—took comfort under the shelter of its branches. For we were just then desperately anxious about the safety of our great little Army, riven by countless hordes of enemies, and driven struggling upon the forts of Paris. The landing of 60,000 Russians at Ostend seemed just the diversion which strategical justice demanded, and we believed what we desperately wished to believe. Again and again I thought that I had confirmation of the great Russian legend. The railways encouraged it, shipping authorities encouraged it, the censorship encouraged it. True or untrue, we wanted the Germans to believe it. Perhaps some day, when the inner history of this war comes to be written—which will not be in weekly parts while it is in progress—we shall know what part the Russian legend played in the swerve of von Kluck from the very outskirts of Paris, a swerve which was the turning-point of the western campaign. It gave us the battle of the Marne, the one decisive battle which changed the whole fortunes of the war.

Meanwhile, the sixteen war correspondents—in whose energies I had a part proprietary interest—were doing unexpectedly well. So long as Belgium was unconquered they had freedom to come and go and even to telegraph. Up to the fall of Antwerp I received daily many good stories. Stories are not the same as news. News are the first curt quick intimations of great events—almost invariably official; stories are the slower and more detailed accounts of those events of which we have already received news. Stories supply the human, the descriptive, even the literary dressing

without which the bald curt news are almost tasteless. My sixteen gallant ones, chivied from village to village in Belgium, and coldly frowned upon by authority in France, kept up their supply of stories with dauntless courage and persistence. Until—as happened a little later—most of them were deported from France as an unbearable nuisance, they kept up the appearance if not quite the reality of exhaustive information.

I shall never forget the retreat of the British Army from Mons. It lives in my memory alongside the Black Week in December 1899, when telegrams of disaster in South Africa dribbled in hour after hour. Readers of newspapers get the worst in one blow of print; they learn little which is not in print. We get news in dribblets, interspersed by warnings not to publish this or that, interspersed too by private information. We become hardened, but now and then even we can be stretched on the rack of anxiety. So it was during the retreat from Mons. Our readers knew little, we knew much more than we wished to know, or was good for our rest in the small hours of morning that we should know. At one time it looked as if our poor gallant Army would be wiped out, and as if it would hardly be worth while to sweep up the pieces. The public will never know, or at least will never realise, the bloody anguish of that retreat, as it was known to and realised by a few of us at the time. Little wonder that we clung to a half belief in the preposterous Russian legend, and strained our mental eyes from the watch-towers day by day, straining for a sight of the dust of the coming of the Army of Versailles. At last it came, but, oh God, how slow it was in coming!

ZIP-ZAP-ZEPPELIN.

'How stands the old Lord Warden?
Are Dover's cliffs still white?'

It is not often vouchsafed to a man to see a great peaceful trading people drift into the most desperate war that the world has yet seen, or to watch their Capital go steadily, yet hesitatingly, over the brink, and lay its surprised feelings bare to the gaze of the onlooker. It happened to the writer to survey the ancient way of Whitehall from an upper balcony of the War Office, from July 31, through the unaccustomed scenes of war fear waxing to war fever. War is an abominable thing, a horror, and an offence before God: that is a point that all may concede. On Sunday afternoon, the second of August, in the year of Our Lord one thousand nine hundred and fourteen, new style, there assembled a great Peace meeting, under the great statue of the greater Nelson. The Lions slept while the whelps watched the curs. Nay, that is a hard saying; for among that meeting on the plinths of the Lions there were many who well and truly preached against the horror of war, mingled with them, those of the lesser breeds, who feared war and their own skins. 'Stop the War!' placards stared you in the face at the corners and on the 'buses. It was not all evil, though only in the narrow horizon of borough-fed politicians and reform cranks could it be imagined that anyone in England wanted war. Be that as it may, while the curs and the kindly ones preached peace from the plinths, and the holiday crowd watched and chaffed and jeered, and Jingo speakers sung the opposite, there came by the tramp of armed men. Throughout the length and breadth of the Kingdom the Army, Regular and Territorial, was scattered far and wide in camps and concentrations. Now, to mobilise, it is necessary for troops to be at home in their peace stations. There are the stores for the field and the hundred-and-one equipments of the mobilisation sheds. From thence the carefully timed railway programmes open. Before a mobilisation could take place it was necessary that the War Office should cry, 'To your tents, O Israel!' But the Cabinet feared to accentuate an acute situation. That afternoon of that summer Sunday, however, the cry had gone forth. Forty trains of Territorial troops which were leaving London that Sunday afternoon for training-

camps were cancelled, and while the meeting babbled, the soldiers tramped back to their headquarters, wondering quite what was to happen, and lacking sadly the tan of the weather that the camp would bring. Past the curs and the kindly ones among the Lions, tramped several thousands of the citizen soldiery, and the crowds watched them in silence—the silence of bewilderment before the heart of the nation stirred. Up Old Whitehall tramped the citizen soldiers, in long drab columns, through the hot streets. Past the bronze plate that few notice, that tells where King Charles, whom some call 'The Martyr,' stepped from the Banqueting Hall out to the block, while all the world wondered, past the motionless sentries in shining cuirass on the coal-black horses, up through the crowd in the Square. That crowd looked and wondered, and forbore to cheer. It did not want war yet, and the 'thousand moving as one' awakened no thrill. Then the peacemakers babbled again, and up in the War Office and the Admiralty men looked out on the crowd, wondered, and returned to polish the electric button they might not press. In the passages of those offices men met and looked, and said: 'What would *you* do, if you broke your faith with your neighbours and helped them not?' Across the way the Premier sat, and to this day no one knows what he thought.

Then, as the peacemakers harangued their crowds—each to his own plinth—while scoffers scoffed, the heavens opened, and tropical rain cleared the streets and the preachers, as a fire clears the prairie. As the weather cleared the crowds returned, and a new feature met the eye. Up cleaned and cooled Whitehall marched the dogs of war. A brigade of field-artillery, without its horses, was dragging its guns with drag-ropes through the excited crowd, and the tension increased hourly, while the newsboys bawled their bulletins—'Speshul! Speshul!' 'Kaiser telegram! Speshul!' 'French Army mobilising! Speshul!' 'Orrible massaker! Speshul!' Late in the evening, the crowds had formed themselves into great solemn phalanxes, and marched up and down Whitehall fifty abreast, singing merrily. As the evening wore on, the note changed to 'Rule, Britannia!' as the soul of the nation awoke. 'Not a bad tune, either,' some one remarked; and all night long the crowds sang and the pens flew over the paper as the officers got ready to mobilise. On the Bank Holiday, the trains were all busy bringing Israel back to its tents, and the holiday folk could not, or had no heart to, leave town. So the seaside girl, in sports coat of myriad hues and white skirt and shoes, took the 'nut' by the arm, and marched

him up and down Whitehall, for all the world like the parade at Hastings; while Admirals and Generals and Ministers hurried to and fro among the Government offices, and the crowd stood and cheered the celebrities: Lord Roberts in all his glory; Sir John French in his pride, quiet and business-like; Sir Edward Carson, to say it was what he was preparing for; 'Uncle Richard,' to give good advice and see that his Territorials got fair play; and Jack his successor spoiling for a fight; the first Lord with the Admiralty terminals quivering;—each and all with his job to do and keen to do it, and the crowd agape to notice it and gain confidence therefrom, as a century before they had gained it from the Duke of York, and Arthur Wellesley, and Pitt himself, and many another before them. So it befell that while the crowd watched, the nation blew clear of all its flummery, and the wirepullers and leagues and secretaries and feminists and all tiresomenesses gave way before war, and the ultimate presentation of the things that matter.

They are wonderful things to know and to see—those things that matter. Now and again—only now and again—is it given to man to differentiate between the things that matter and the things that do not. You may know the difference over the grave—especially across a dead child—when the eyes meet and the cry is 'Too late! too late!' You sometimes see it when the lodge is close tyled, and perhaps when the crowds cheer, and the steamer leaves the quay, or a Scott and an Oates die in the limelight, and the man of ease sings with the martyr:—

'What would I die for, what do I care,
I that was born to an easy chair?'

The good, peaceful English, who dreamt of golf and of football and lives of peace and prosperity, now deliberately accused of preparing for war, were to get some useful glimmering of the things that matter and know the price as well as the glory of standing by the written word.

So all that strange holiday the seaside girls paraded Whitehall, and all day long hawkers cried badges and flags of all the nations. Tuesday and Wednesday the selfish folk rushed to corner the food, and the Whitehall crowd surged denser to cheer and see the Ministers come and go. England was beginning to enjoy the sensation and cheer.—Cheers for the Premier! Cheers for the officers hurrying to and fro! Cheers for Mr. Lloyd George and

Mr. Churchill! Cheers for comfort and cheers for glory, and cheers lest tears came instead! On Tuesday, mobilisation—a general mobilisation—was ordered. Few knew what it meant. The Wednesday, August 5, was the 'first day of mobilisation,' and the country found itself in the grip of a kindly despotism. Hardly a soul in England understood what war was to mean, outside the General Staff of the Army and the War Staff of the Navy. It was ninety-and-nine years since the country had fought in a war that mattered. Such distant trivialities as the Crimea and the Mutiny, and the quarrel with China, left the nation untroubled. The war in South Africa, with all its three years of expenditure and loss, was but a row in our own pantry. Threats of invasion had been but threats, and that not for a century. Since Norman William the Mamzer had hammered Saxon England into sullen acquiescence in Norman rule, the invader has never set competent feet on these shores. In Alsace and Lorraine, in Switzerland, on all the marches of Europe, folks have heard the old folk talk of what their fathers' fathers saw. Frenchman, Cossack, Croat, Uhlan and the like, have left tracks that have burnt deep into men's memories—even as Belgium will remember for thrice a hundred years. But to the English, and the English alone, had the 'Swan's nest' in a pool remained. The Armada had been but a nightmare, the thunder of whose hoofs had but died away in the night; and the Race of Castlebar and the Irish Rebellion were merely a memory. No; for a thousand years, England had been virgin England, and for a hundred and ten years the English had slept secure in their beds and forgotten the fright that 'Boney' had given their fathers' fathers.

Out of the back parts of London, the hawkers—and the factories that cater for them—had risen to the occasion, to show that enterprise was not dead: badges in enamel, cocked hats in paper of French *gens d'armes*, and flags of all the allied nations, appeared like magic—flags large to wave, flags small to wear. 'Wear your colours!' 'Wear your colours!' cried the hawkers. 'Move on, please!' 'Pass along, please!' 'Pass along!' called the police. 'That's Bobs! There he is!' 'Did ye see Hasquith?' 'My! look at his medals!' And Big Ben chimed the hours, and the sentries in the shining helmets relieved one another, and the soul of a nation found itself.

In the Army and Navy the serving officers were hard at work; but to the steps of Admiralty and War Office flocked the older

officers of the retired lists—'the grizzled drafts of years gone by'—anxious to bear a hand. 'Was it storm, our fathers faced it!' Came, too, all the busybodies, and the ankle-biters with axes to grind, all the men who had refused to bear a hand in peace and be allotted to their place—all anxious now to hinder, to hamper, and to quack; and outside, the crowd passed comments freely, and the papers had a new bulletin each hour.

Parties of men with their kitbags marched steadily down the street, on their way to join mobilised units, steady and stern and alert. A party of gunners from the Wood, with their horses, making for Waterloo, passed a party of hurrying bluejackets, and the Services saluted one another, by the great gun that came from Srinagapatam. A grey-haired lady stood with two daughters and watched: such a mother as Horatio Nelson or the Brushwood Boy might have owned, and also may happily be found presiding in many an English home—a mother with a boy in India and a boy in the Fleet, who knew all that war meant to womenkind, since her husband lay dead in the Afghan hills. Two recruiting-sergeants were driving a roaring trade, and a crowd of proper lads gathered round them, with here a girl pushing one forward, another pulling one back.

'See!' said the mother. 'Look at the lads going to enlist! Ah, my dears! this will make the men men, and the women women, once again.' And the women were beginning to look at the men in the old way: the way that is worth having, that said, plainly enough, 'If you want me, go and fight for me'—just the hint to be up and doing that has finally crystallised into the much more definite form of 'No khaki, no cuddle.' And all the while the roof was falling about the ears of silly leagues, for silly committees to twaddle over; and the paid secretaries saw starvation stare them in the face, as the people with one accord fell away from their follies and came straight back to the old ways of the English—the good old way—to fight for the right and see the fight through, and, after the way of their fathers, never to know when they are beaten. Then while the little suburban folks made a fuss of being brave, the good, quiet, old folk of the old stock—of whom the country is really full—went about their business as if it were the right thing and nothing to be surprised about.

In the side streets off the Strand, and up into Soho and down by the Roman Bath, the foreigners chattered—the Danes and the Dutchmen and the Poles, and the Greeks and the Italians; while

Mr. Appenrodt's men hastily pasted 'British subjects' over their window-panes, swallowed the stock of Bismarck herring and *Aufschnitt*, and slipped away to their consuls for passage back to their fatherland, jostling at the railway station with the French and the Poles.

Outside Buckingham Palace, in the warm summer nights, the crowds would wait till in the evening their Majesties came out to show themselves, and the people cheered again for an English King—and a sailor, too. 'Ver' goot Kink—Kink Cheorge. You see! You vait a little, Mister, and you see Italy she come help Kink Cheorge.' And the ice-cream man shook hands with his customers, and tried to persuade a policeman to let him inside the Park. A 'bus-load of Chelsea pensioners rolled by and the crowd cheered them, too, for their Crimean medals, and a Frenchman took off his hat and called out 'C'est la Réserve!'

In Birdcage Walk, all the girls in London were chatting with their Guardsmen, and watched the Reservists fitting their belts, and chaffed them duly; while the commandeered parties were bringing in the town horses, and were tethering them to the trees in the Park, as each piece in the puzzle fitted into its appointed place. Then there came an historic morning, when all of a sudden, without warning and without notice, the Guards left for France—just as they had done a hundred years before; and it is a scene that is not easily forgot by those few who knew it was to happen. Before England had recovered from the surprise of war she woke to find her Army in France, and *la belle France* beside herself at the sight; while the silent Navy held the seas, with the 'whip at the fore,' and seven army corps of Territorials in being watched her coasts.

All of which will no doubt some day be duly chronicled in sober language, and the excitement and the glory and the pity of it will be forgotten, and the searching with which the Nation of Shopkeepers found itself, as the great Lord Kitchener moved to the helm and lent his name to those who drove the great engines. And it will, too, be forgotten how we were all too busy to even tell our friends and neutral neighbours what we were doing and why, and how this very ingenuous remissness came back to us as coals of fire when kindred folks had to find out things for themselves, and were left to find them out their own way, and in so doing found perspective.

The anxiety, too, will be forgotten as to whether or no the Navy of 1914 was as good as that of 1805, and whether 'the storm-tossed ships on which the grand Army never looked' were to stand once

again between an Emperor and the dominion of the world. Or whether the army of French and Haig had the 'guts' of those of Wellington and 'Daddy' Hill. Now we know, and feel that we always knew it was so. Modern nerves have apparently progressed in fibre with the instruments designed to shatter them—as armour has kept pace with projectile. The Navy stands blood as in the days of yore, when the gunnels and scuppers were painted red to hide the flowing horror, without such aids to oblivion. 'The scalded stokers yelp delight,' as the fight 'stamps over their steel-walled pen.' It would seem that now that death is so terrible, men can ignore it altogether and say with the chaplain at the grave: 'O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?' So now that every British soldier has discovered that he belongs to a military race and that his adversary, be he never so reckless, does not, we are apt to forget those earlier searchings and tremors and to settle down to the belief that war is quite the sort of atmosphere we thrive best in—and perhaps it is. At any rate, there is now no manner or shadow of possible doubt that the North Sea is not also the German Ocean.

The North Sea schooner curtseying low, has given place to the black patrol, dipping deep her nose in the winter spray; while the English look on it all as the most natural thing on earth. From the daily tally of men with gladstone bags from the uttermost ends of the earth, that wait outside the recruiting-sheds on the Horse Guards parade, and the Boy Scouts who march them off to the railway station, down to the babies who mock at the Zeppelins, all is but wonted routine. As a man sows so shall he reap, and W. Hohenzollern has sown the dragon's teeth, saved the English from themselves, and now stands by to garner the harvest into the great tithe-barn.

Nevertheless, it is a long way from the set ways of a well-waged war to the dim distant days of August last, before the nation found itself and learned to *porter le flingot* alongside their glorious neighbours *les pantalons rouges* and their ever ready *soixante-quinze*.

G. F. MACMUNN.

THE NEW POETS.¹

BY ARTHUR C. BENSON.

THERE'S a dark window in a gable which looks out over my narrow slip of garden, where the almond-trees grow ; and to-day the dark window with its black casement lines had become suddenly a Japanese panel—the almond was in bloom, with its delicious pink geometrical flowers : not a flower which wins one's love, somehow—it's not homely or sweet enough for that ; but it's unapproachably pure and beautiful, with a touch of fanaticism about it—the fanaticism which comes of stainless strength—as though one woke in the dawn and found an angel in one's room : he would not quite understand one's troubles !

But when I looked lower down, there was a sweeter message still, for the Mezereon was awake, with its tiny porcelain crimson flowers and its minute leaves of bright green, budding as I think Aaron's rod must have budded, the very crust of the sprig bursting into little flames of green and red.

I thought at the sight of all this that some good fortune was about to befall me ; and so it did. When I came back, there came a friend to see me, whom I seldom see and much enjoy seeing. He is young, but he plays a fine part in the world ; and he carries about with him two very fine qualities : one is a great and generous curiosity about what our writers are doing. He is the first man from whom I hear of new and beautiful work ; and he praises it royally, he murmurs phrases, he even declaims it in his high thin voice, which wavers like a dry flame ; and what makes all this so refreshing is that his other great quality is an intensely critical spirit, which stares closely and intently at work, as through a crystalline lens.

After we had talked a little, I said to him, 'Come, praise me some new writers, you herald of the dawn ! You always do that when you come to see me, and you must do it now.' He smiled secretly, and drew out a slim volume from his pocket and read me some verses ; I will not be drawn into saying the name of the poet. 'How do you find that ?' he said. 'Oh,' I said, 'it is very good ; but is it the finest gold ?'

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'Yes,' he said, 'it is that!' And he then read me some more.

'Now,' I said, 'I will be frank with you. That seems to me very musical and accomplished; but it has what is to me the one unpardonable fault in poetry: it is literary! He has heard and read, that poet, so much sweet and solemn verse, that his mind murmurs like a harp hung among the trees that are therein; the winds blow into music. But I don't want that—I want a fount of song, a spring of living water.' He looked a little vexed at that, and read me a few more pages. And then he went on to praise the work of two or three other writers, and added that he believed there was going to be a great outburst of poetry after a long frost. 'Well,' I said, 'I am sure I hope so! And if there is one thing in the world that I desire, it is that I may be able to recognise and love the new voices.'

And then I told him a story of which I often think. When I was a young man, very much preoccupied with Tennyson and Omar Khayyam and Swinburne, I went to stay with an elderly banker, a friend of my family. He was a great, big, stout, rubicund man, very good-natured, and he had a voice like the cry of an expiring mouse—shrill and thin. We were sitting after dinner in his huge dining-room, several of us, looking out into a wide, dusty garden, when the talk turned on books, and I suppose I praised Swinburne, for he asked me to say some; and I quoted the poem which says

'And even the weariest river
Winds somewhere safe to sea.'

He heard me attentively enough, and said it was pretty good; but then he said that it was nothing to Byron; and then the old man in his squeaky voice quoted a quantity of Byron, whose poetry I am sorry to say I regarded as I might regard withered flowers, and worse; his eyes brimmed with tears, and they fell on to his shirt front; and then he said decisively that there had been no poetry since Byron—none at all; Tennyson was mere word-music, Browning was unintelligible, and so forth. And I remember how, with the insolence of youth, I thought how dreadful it was that the old man should have lost all sympathy and judgment; because poetry then seemed to me a really important matter, full of tones and values. I did not understand then, as I understand now, that it is all a question of signals and symbols, and that poetry is but, as the psalm says, what happens when one day

tellet another and one night certifieth another. I know now that there can be no deceit about poetry, and that no poet can make you feel more than he feels himself, though he cannot always make another feel as much; and that the worth of his art exists only just in so far as he can say what he feels; and then I thought of my old friend's mind, as I might think of a scarecrow among lonely fields—a thing absurd, ragged, and left alone, while real men went about their business. I did not say it, but I thought it in my folly.

So I told my young friend that story, and I said, 'I know that it does not really matter what one loves, and is moved by, as long as one loves something and is moved by its beauty. But still I do not want that to happen to me; I do not want to be like a pebble on the beach, when the water draws past it to the land. I want to feel and understand the new signals! In the nursery,' I said, 'we used to anger our governess when she read us a piece of poetry, by saying to her, 'Who made it up?' You should say, 'Who wrote it?' she would say. But I feel now inclined to ask, 'Who made it up?'—and I feel, too, like the sign-painter on his rounds, who saw a new sign hung up at an inn, and said in disgust, "That looks as if someone had been doing it himself"—your poet seems to me only a very gifted and accomplished amateur!'

'Well,' he said rather petulantly, 'it may be so, of course! But I don't think that you can hope to advance, if you begin by being determined to disapprove.'

'No, not that,' I said. 'But one knows of many cases of inferior poets, who were taken up and trumpeted abroad by well-meaning admirers, whom one sees now to have had no significance, but to be so many blind alleys in the street of art; they led nowhere; one had just to retrace one's steps, if one explored them. Indeed,' I said, 'I had rather miss a great poet than be misled by a little one!'

'Ah, no,' he said, 'I don't feel that. I had rather be thrilled and carried away, even if I discovered afterwards that it was not really great.'

'If you will freely admit that it may not be great,' I said, 'I am on your side. I do not mind your saying, "This touches me, with interest and delight; but it is not to be reckoned among the lords of the garden!" What I object to is your saying "This is great and eternal!" I feel that I should be able to respond to

the great poet, if he flashed out among us ; but he must be great—and especially in a time when there really is a quantity of very beautiful verse. I feel myself that, perhaps, this time is one that will furnish out a very beautiful anthology. There are many people alive who have written, perhaps, half a dozen exquisite lyrics, when the spring and the soaring thought and the vision and the beautiful word, all suddenly conspired together. But there is no great, wide, large, tender heart at work. No, I won't even say that ! But there is no great spirit who has all that and a supreme word-power as well. I believe that there is more poetry, more love of beauty, more emotion in the world than ever ; and a great many men and women are living their poetry, who just can't write it or sing it.'

'A perverse generation seeking after a sign !' he said rather grimly ; 'and there is no sign forthcoming except the old sign, that has been there for centuries ! I don't care,' he added, 'about the sign of the thing. It is the quality that I want ; and these new poets, of whom I have been speaking, have got the quality. That is all I ask for.'

'No,' I said, 'I want a great deal more than that ! Browning gave us the sense of the human heart, bewildered by all the new knowledge, and yet passionately desiring. Tennyson—'

'Poor old Tennyson !' he said.

'That is very ungracious,' I said. 'You are as perverse as I was about Byron, when the old banker quoted him with tears. I was going to say, and I will say it, that Tennyson with all his faults, was a great lord of music ; and he put into words the fine homely domestic emotion of the race, the poetry of labour, order, and peace. It was new and rich and splendid, and because it seems to you old-fashioned, you call it mere respectability ; but it was the marching music of the world, because he showed men that faith was enlarged and not overturned by science. But these two were great, because they saw far and wide ; they knew by instinct just what the ordinary man was thinking, who yet wished his life to be set to music. These little men of yours don't see that ! They have their moment of ecstasy, as we all have, in the blossoming orchard full of the songs of birds. And that will always and for ever give us the lyric, if the skill is there. But I want something more than that : I, you, thousands of people are feeling something, that makes the brain thrill and the heart leap—the mischief is

that we don't know what it is; and I want a great poet to come and tell us.'

'Ah!' he said, 'I am afraid you want something ethical, something that satisfies the man in Tennyson who

"Walked between his wife and child
And now and then he gravely smiled."

But we have done with all that; what we want are people who can express the fine rare unusual thoughts of highly organised creatures, and you want a poet to sing of bread-and-butter!

'Why, yes,' I said. 'I think I agree with FitzGerald that tea and bread-and-butter are the only foods worth anything—the only things one cannot do without. And it is just the things that one cannot do without that I want the new great poet to sing of. I agree with William Morris that art is the one thing we all want—the expression of man's joy in his work. And the more that art retires into fine nuances and intellectual subtleties, the more that it becomes something esoteric and mysterious, the less I care about it. When Tennyson said to the farmer's wife, "What's the news?" she replied, "Mr. Tennyson, there's only one piece of news worth telling, and that is that Christ died for all men." Tennyson said very grandly and simply, "Ah, that's old news and good news and *new* news!"—and that is exactly what I want the poets to tell us. It is a common inheritance, not a refined monopoly, that I claim.'

He laughed at this, and said: 'I think that's rather a mid-Victorian view. I will confute you out of the Tennyson legend. When Tennyson called Swinburne's verse "poisonous honey, brought from France," Swinburne retorted by speaking of the Laureate's domestic treacle. You can't have both. If you like treacle, you must not clamour for honey.'

'Yes, I prefer honey,' I said, 'but you seem to me to be in search of what I called *literary* poetry. That is what I am afraid of. I don't want the work of a mind fed on words and valuing ideas the more that they are uncommon. I hate what is called "strong" poetry; that seems to me to be generally the coarsest kind of romanticism—melodrama, in fact. I want to have in poetry what we are getting in fiction—the best sort of realism. Realism is now abjuring the heroic theory; it has thrown over the old conventions, the felicitous coincidences, life arranged on ideal lines; and it has gone straight to life itself, strong, full-blooded, eager life, full of mistakes and blunders, and failures and sharp disasters, and fears.

Life goes shambling along like a big dog, but it has got its nose on the scent of something. It is a much more mysterious and prodigious affair than life rearranged upon romantic lines. It means something very vast indeed, though it splashes through mud and scrambles through hedges. You may laugh at what you call ethics, but that is only a name for one of many kinds of collisions; it is the fact that we are always colliding with something, always coming unpleasant croppers—that is the exciting thing; and I want the poet to tell me what the obscure winged thing is that we are following; and if he can't explain it to me, I want to be made to feel that it is worth while following. I don't say that all life is poetical material. I don't think that it is; but there is a thing called beauty which seems to me the most maddeningly perfect thing in the world. I see it everywhere—in the dawn, in the far-off landscape with all its rolling lines of wood and field, in the faces and gestures of people, in their words and deeds. That is a clue, a golden thread, a line of scent, and I shall be more than content if I am encouraged to follow that.'

'Ah!' he said, 'now I partly agree with you; it is just that which the new men are after; they take the pure gold of life and just coin it into word and phrase; and it is that which I discern in them.'

'Yes,' I said, 'but I want something a great deal bigger than that. I want to see it everywhere and in everything. I don't want to have to wall in a little space, and make it silent and beautiful, and forget what is happening outside. I want a poet to tell me what it is that leaps in the eyes and beckons in the smiles of people whom I meet—people whom, often enough, I could not live with—the more's the pity—but whom I want to be friends with all the same. I want the common joys and hopes and visions to be put into music. And when I find a man, like Walt Whitman, who does show me the beauty and wonder and the strong affections and joys of simple hearts, so that I feel sure that we are all desiring the same thing, though we cannot tell each other what it is, then I feel I am in the presence of a poet indeed.'

My young friend shut up the little book which he had been holding in his hand. 'Yes,' he said, 'that would be a great thing; but one can't get at things in that way now; we must all specialise; and if you want to follow the new aims and ideals of art, you must put aside a great deal of what is called our common humanity, and you must be content to follow a very narrow path among the

stars. I do not mind speaking quite frankly. I do not think you understand what art is ; it is essentially a mystery, and the artist is a sort of hermit in the world. It is not a case of " joys in widest commonalty spread," as Daddy Wordsworth said. That is quite a different affair ; but art has got to withdraw itself, to be content to be misunderstood ; and I think that you have just as much parted company with it as your old friend the banker.'

' Well,' I said, ' we shall see. Anyhow, I will give your new poets a careful reading, and I shall be glad if I can really admire them, because indeed I don't want to be stranded on a lee shore ! '

And so my friend departed ; and I began to wonder whether the art of which he spoke was not, after all, as real a thing as the beauty of my almond-flower and my Mezereons ! If so, I should like to be able to include it and understand it ; though I do not want to think that it is the end.

THE ROOT OF THE OAK.

'It is foolish to speak of Nature as inanimate and of her patience as inexhaustible, for we do not lack positive evidence that there exists a line of provocation beyond which it is not safe for man to step.—J. R. PASLEW.'

My stepfather, Mr. Horace Grainger, was a man in the middle forties, tall, well-built and of strong colouring. There was not a drachm of sentiment in his composition; and although I might respect him, I cannot pretend that I ever liked him. His business, which grew (I believe) from very small beginnings, had to do with house property, and he came to own a great number of houses in different suburbs of London. He anticipated many of the urban migrations of the time; so that when builders, and surveyors, and prospective residents had flocked out in some new direction, there they would find Mr. Grainger, already in possession of the choicest building sites, and waiting to be bought out at his own price.

About three years after my mother's death, when I was a boy of sixteen at a public school, he tried a new departure in building for himself on a large scale. Old Sir Carus Wylde, the tenth baronet, having died of senility, the great Wylde estate in the north of London came into the market. The County Council at once laid hands on some forty acres for one of those hideous 'parks,' fertile only in bandstands and iron chairs, that add so greatly to the depressing squalor of our outer suburbs; but hard on their heels came my stepfather. With his usual adroitness, he acquired two long strips of valuable land: one along the main road, suitable for shops; one running north from this at right angles, where private houses might be erected. He determined to build on these strips himself, and to begin at once; for already the great invasion of cheap red brick, and rough-cast, and Norwegian timber overlapped the old estate to east and west, and a crowd of other builders were falling over each other in their eagerness to rend and disfigure this virgin soil.

And now began one of those terrible transformations that have ringed London about with ugliness and crime. For it is a crime to build after the fashion of the modern cheap contractor. People

talk of the devastation of the Palatinate: it is nothing to the devastation of the Home Counties. I was an unwilling witness of this beginning, for it befell in my summer holidays, and I accompanied my stepfather on his visits to his new property. Every visit filled me with pain and anger; for even then I had a passionate love of the country and of all beautiful things. The Wylve estate had been very beautiful—well-timbered, with pleasant undulations and a small tributary of the Thames trickling through its midst. A noble Georgian house stood in a sloping garden, heavy with the scent of ancient flowers. And now this garden was being planted out with green notice-boards, indicating the hours between which it was open, and where you might step and where you might not; and the old house was to provide club- and tea-rooms, and a dancing hall for the insufferable population of the district. And everywhere else miracles were happening—bad, dreadful miracles. A thousand devils, in the lineaments of surveyors, and plumbers, and builders, were at work. Trees that had stood for centuries were dug up by the roots. The rich grass withered and died beneath heaps of cheap bricks and cheap timber. Incomparable turf slopes were gashed cruelly with embryo roads, like wounds that seemed to bleed unpitied and unheeded; and above them, as if in mockery, stood sign posts, bearing in pseudo-archaic lettering their future designations—River View Road, De Beauvoir Crescent, Alcibiades Avenue.

And on all sides one saw enormous notice-boards, sprung up in a night like terrifying growths, offering artistic modern bijou residences, from £45 per annum upwards. . . . Boy as I was, I remember that, as I looked about upon this panorama of ruin, there came into my mind the queer idea that perhaps one day long-suffering Nature would rise against her persecutors and overwhelm them, so that they would die in terror of her, and the great weeds would climb once more upon their ephemeral altars to the God of Gain.

During my third visit to the estate, I was the silent but interested listener to a dialogue between my stepfather and the foreman of the works concerning an immense oak that rose from the middle of a plot allotted to a bijou villa. It was an astonishing great tree, its hollow trunk, crusted with ivy, large enough to fill a room, the shadow of its leaves covering the whole garden and the width of the road beside. Its giant roots lay upon the ground as though they were the limbs of some antediluvian; and when one peeped through a hole in the bark, it was black and deep within, like a well.

'It seems a pity to cut down that tree,' said the foreman. 'It's a wunnerful bit of timber, an' it'll be down of itself afore long.'

'Well,' said my stepfather, 'I can't push the house back for the sake of a tree; and if I did it would nearly fill the garden.'

'That it would,' said the foreman, a little contemptuously, I thought. 'They'll need to grow a new sort o' tree for these modern gardens. When *that* grew they didn't trouble about space. It's a famous tree, they tell me. Bound up in the family fortunes, an' all that. Well, it's true, anyway: the family's gone, an' the tree's going. . . . It's nigh six hundred year old, they say; and one of these here Wylves hanged hisself on it once.'

'Well, no one else will,' remarked my stepfather. 'And that's very certain. See that it comes down this week.'

When next I went there, the tree was down. Its massive, contorted limbs lay piled in the roadway; the pit they had dug about its roots was filled in again; and men were measuring trenches for what were euphemistically termed the foundations of the villa.

Shortly after, I returned to school. Coming home for Christmas, I learnt that half the houses in Wylve Park Road—for so my stepfather's thoroughfare was named—were already finished and tenanted. Presently, an unwilling victim, I was taken to see the adolescent suburb, and I was able to exhibit genuine astonishment at the progress it had made in a couple of months. Most of the roads, it is true, were simple mud-sloughs, for metalling was left to the end; but the whole great estate was now covered with buildings in every stage of construction. Religion went hand in hand with commerce; for on the summit of the hill, by the main park gates, an Italianate church of peculiar ugliness had already risen to the eaves.

I remember that I looked with some interest at the villa which had replaced the great oak on which a man had hanged himself. It was a house of some pretentiousness, rented (as my stepfather informed me) at £50 a year. In plan, it was of that meaningless irregularity that is now considered so emphatically artistic. It had one rough-cast gable, disproportionately large. Its front door was set at an angle, for no other reason that I could see than that most doors are permitted to stand flush with the wall. There were a number of small, odd-shaped windows scattered about, apparently at random, with bottle-glass much in evidence. All

the external wood-work—including useless shutters with orifices the shape of tulips—was painted green, perhaps in satiric recognition of the fact that it was green within. The house was called Oak-Dene, whatever that may signify. Picturing in my mind the noble tree it had displaced, the name struck me as an insult—a malignant perpetuation of a crime.

It happened that during the next half-year I saw even less than usual of my stepfather, for I passed the Easter holidays at the house of a school friend. After the Summer Term I intended to screw up my courage to speak to Mr. Grainger about my future. He had hitherto taken it for granted that I should join him in his business, but I was secretly determined to do nothing of the sort. When the long holiday came, however, our projected journey to France and the dreaded discussion were alike delayed. My stepfather was bringing an action against one of his tenants for recovery of rent, and he was determined to be present at the proceedings, which were due about the middle of August. The matter appeared to worry him, which surprised me, for he was always engaged in litigation of this kind. But as the case developed I was still more surprised.

'It's Oak-Dene, you know, over at Wylve Park,' my stepfather explained; 'and this makes the third lot who have cut and run from that house in six months. I'm getting tired of it. I got my money back from the others easily enough—they seemed only too glad to pay up and quit; but this rascal won't hand over a farthing—says the house is damp and unhealthy, and makes the children ill, and all that nonsense. You never heard such rubbish! Unhealthy, indeed! It's two hundred feet up, gravel soil, faces south, no trees about it, and drains perfect. I always see to that: bad drains are false economy in these days of sanitary inspectors, and other damned busybodies. But you remember the house, I dare say. . .? Anyone would think the plague was in it, from the way these people talk; and yet when you try to pin 'em down to a plain statement of fact they ramble on about its being gloomy and creepy! Their very words! But I'll make 'em sit up! There's this to be said: I've made the rent three times over in the first half-year. . . It's bad business, though, all the same: frightens other people, and all that. Family next door cleared off, because of this. Nothing to complain of themselves, but just scared—people are crazy about infection in these days. . . The house is let again now, thank goodness! I hope we shan't hear any more of this nonsense.'

But we did. Before the case came on the new tenants of Oak-Dene sacrificed their year's rent and fled. They would give no explanation, except that the house didn't suit them. They had been in it just a fortnight.

I really thought my stepfather would have had apoplexy when he heard the news. He instantly summoned a fresh assortment of surveyors, and we descended together upon Oak-Dene. We went through it from cellar to roof-tree, without result. No one could pretend it was stoutly built: the roof leaked here and there into the attics, and some of the windows were warped already; but such imperfections were common to every house on the estate, and there had been no time for any serious faults to develop. The surveyors were puzzled but unanimous. They would swear before any Court of Law that the house was habitable in all respects. What its state might be ten years later was none of their business.

But for my part I paid small attention to the drains and the leaks. I had a conviction that the mystery would not be solved by plumbers. These successive stampedes of tenants, which (naturally enough) only enraged my stepfather, stirred my imagination. I knew what sort of people these tenants were. A year's rent and a second removal within a few weeks meant for them serious sacrifices. They were well used to leaks and draughts: such discomforts are part of the recognised price one has to pay for living in villas with grandiloquent names, such as Oak-Dene, or Audley End, or Mon Repos. It must have been no small thing that had driven them forth, panic-stricken, one after the other. Gloomy, they had called the house, and creepy. To my astonishment, it had that effect upon me also, although the impression was palpably illogical. For we were now in high summer, and the afternoon was brilliantly fine, so that the front rooms, facing south and lacking blind and curtain, were as hot as ovens, and as dazzling as flames. Yet when I had left them, I found I retained a distinct sensation of darkness and menace. Nor was this all. Standing in the dining-room itself, I had more than once the strange fancy that the house lay among thick timber. This dining-room was papered red, for they adore red paper in the suburbs, and it had a frieze of purple barges trailing over a sapphire sea; but not even this discord of colour, nor yet the human noises all about me, nor again the dust of my own passage still sparkling in the intolerable sunlight, availed against the recurrent conviction that all about me hung a phantom penumbra, cold, and grey, and still, like the twilight beneath great

trees. I seemed to hear (without hearing) stealthy falling noises and the sibilant talk of leaves. And again I was alone amid a vast silence that yet was no true silence at all, like the silence of the forests, where, though there may be no breath of wind, no song of birds, no soft footfall in the undergrowth, one's ear is always lulled by the infinite crepitation of small sounds. . . .

It was as we left the house that one of the party called attention to the garden.

'Rum soil, this,' he said. 'Look at those ferns. You wouldn't think to see ferns grow like that, with no shade. There don't seem to be anything else, hardly.'

I had given little thought to the garden of Oak-Dene, beyond remarking that it was very dishevelled. But now I realised that there were no flowers in it at all—no wild flowers, even. Ferns, on the other hand, grew everywhere. They were coming up in the thin, untidy grass: tightly curled shoots were forcing their way through the gravel of the paths; and as for the beds, they were hidden in a mass of bracken and weeds and saplings, tangled together, for all the world like the undergrowth of a wood. There were no walls or trees to provide shade; and in the gardens on either hand roses and carnations and hollyhocks were blooming.

'It's gravel, you see,' my stepfather said: 'And the fools have gone so fast that the place has run to seed.' With which he dismissed the subject. But that incongruous growth of bracken puzzled me all the way home.

Within a week after this, the case of the defaulting tenant came before the local bench. The defendant had no logical or legal defence at all. He said he had never felt well in the house: therefore it must be unhealthy. Asked to specify any particular instance, he was understood to mumble something about 'gave me the shivers.' Were any members of his family ill? No, except for having the shivers also. Was the house damp? No, he could not say it was: on second thoughts, however, supposed it must have been. Had he any trouble with the drains? No. And so on. . . . On the other hand, a phalanx of self-possessed and reliable authorities pronounced Oak-Dene to be in perfect repair, as indeed (according to modern lights) it certainly was. The defendant was ordered to pay the three quarters' rent still owing, and costs, by monthly instalments. But, in spite of all, I sympathised with the man. He was a very ordinary creature, obstinate and litigious, muddle-headed and inarticulate, who firmly believed himself to

be the victim of some nebulous sort of fraud. His grievance, whatever it was, was plainly too vague for his limited powers of expression ; but I was left with the conviction that he was a badly frightened man.

Toward the end of the case the fact came out that no fewer than three other families had abandoned the house since its completion.

'This is surely a little odd, Mr. Grainger,' the magistrate observed. 'There really would seem to be something—er—distasteful about this house. I should look into it, you know. I should look into it.'

'I intend to do so, sir,' said my stepfather grimly. 'I am going to live in it myself for a few months.'

In fact, our holiday plan was now completely abandoned, for my stepfather acted promptly, as was his custom. We lived at that time in one of those big houses in Forest Hill ; and from here two servants and a sufficiency of furniture were to be transferred as soon as possible to Wylve Park. I accepted thankfully an invitation to spend the rest of the holidays with my school friend. I was never thoroughly at ease with my stepfather ; and in his present mood, six weeks of his company, added to the banality of being interned in London during the summer, was an unattractive prospect. It was true that the mystery of Oak-Dene appealed to my imagination, but this would wait, for he assured me he intended to stay there into the new year.

I went away at once, and did not see him again until the end of the next term, my last but one. We never corresponded freely, and to my questions concerning Oak-Dene he only replied that there was nothing wrong with the house. His letters were shorter than usual, but in the last he gave me to understand (vaguely and reluctantly, for he hated acknowledging difficulties) that he was having trouble with the servants. They did not like the house.

I came home, with thousands of other schoolboys, a few days before Christmas. I did not consider myself a schoolboy for I was in my eighteenth year, and old for my age. I can remember now every incident of that long drive through the winter afternoon, from St. Pancras across the northern suburbs to Wylve Park. It was a beautiful, crisp day, with ice in the gutters ; and a chill sun was sinking into the smoke banks in the west. I felt some little exhilaration, I remember, as we drew near the house, for in the winter time, with fires and the long nights, one is prepared to meet all sorts of mysteries.

But nothing had prepared me for the change in my stepfather.

He opened the door to me himself, and I must have shown my dismay very plainly, for he frowned as he shook my hand. I have said he was ordinarily an upright, fresh-coloured man over-careful of his dress. In fact, he was still some years short of fifty; and his thick hair, when last I saw him, had been iron grey. And now it was white—pure white all over! The colour was gone from his face, his cheeks were sunken, and deep shadows lay beneath his eyes; his clothes were slovenly, and hung loosely upon him; and the hand he gave me was cold and shaking. He might have been a man of sixty-five. I was indescribably shocked, and, I will admit, a little frightened.

'Are you ill, sir?' I asked (he always liked me to address him as 'sir').

'Ill?' he snapped. 'Nonsense, boy! Of course not. I am worried, that's all. What with this damned house, and the servants. . . . Have you paid the cab?'

I said I had not, and fumbling in his pocket, he went down the path to where the man was handling my box. As I stood looking after him with consternation and pity, I noted how he stooped and shuffled his feet—he who had always prided himself upon his upright carriage. And at the same time my eye took in the front garden, and I observed how it was choked, obliterated, by dead bracken and leaves. Some of the latter had blown into a corner of the porch, and I saw they were oak and ivy. I wondered where they came from; for there was no oak tree now within a quarter of a mile; and ivy, in that wilderness of new houses, was a thing unknown.

As soon as my box was set down in the hall and the man gone, my stepfather slammed the door and led the way into the dining-room. Here, as in the hall, the electric light was full on: indeed, I found this was the case all over the house, although the sun was only just setting. It struck me that the place was untidy, and in great need of a duster and broom.

'You will want some tea,' said my stepfather; 'I have ordered it, but God knows if the old crone has remembered. I am only just back from the office myself. You'll have to rough it a bit here, my boy: I can't get a decent servant for love or money. At least, I could, of course, if I chose to spend my time in the registry office; but I have other things to think of. The ones they send up here are impossible—quite impossible!'

I asked why the original pair he had imported from Forest Hill had left him, for they had been with us a long time.

'Oh, some silly nonsense about the house!' he cried savagely. 'It's always the house, the house. . . . Damn the house! But I'll win yet! I'll beat it!'

He glared at me, waved his hands wildly, and ran from the room, calling for 'Mrs. Simmonds,' whom I took to be the servant. I think he had let out more than he intended, and was furious with himself and me for his loss of control. But this exhibition, coupled with the truly appalling change in his appearance, put me in a great fear. Here was a home-coming indeed!

He returned in a moment, calm again and smiling.

'I'm glad to have you back, my boy,' said he, clapping me on the shoulder and speaking with unusual kindness. 'It is a long time since we saw each other, and I find it lonely here. I'm afraid this is rather a dull place—not many visitors, and all that sort of thing—but we'll go out and see some theatres.'

There was something in this geniality—a sort of nervous, ingratiating tone, like that of a man who rather fears a rebuff—that (in one usually so self-reliant and brusque) was disconcerting and even painful; and I hardly knew how to take it. At this moment Mrs. Simmonds appeared with the tea tray. She proved to be a repulsive old lady with a squint and one prominent front tooth. Truly, I thought, if there be some malign influence in this house, you should be able to make head against it, on the principle of the counter-irritant; for anybody more like a witch I never saw. My stepfather shrugged his shoulders wearily as she departed.

'You see how we are placed,' said he. 'It is a poor home-coming for you, I'm afraid.'

'Couldn't we go back to Forest Hill?' I suggested, encouraged by his unwonted graciousness.

'No!' he cried, banging his fist upon the table so that the tea-cups jumped in their saucers: 'No! Nothing will make me leave this house until I've conquered its damned tricks. . . . Nothing! Nothing!'

His voice trailed away on the last word. He looked nervously over his shoulder and seemed to listen. And in this pause, as instinctively I listened also, I thought I could hear a soft, rustling sound, that rose and died away, like the long sigh of wind among trees. But whence it came, or what caused it, or whether it was a delusion, I could not say.

Thenceforward through the unappetising meal my stepfather talked quite rationally about indifferent matters. I was eager to question him about the house, but held my tongue, for I wanted him to forget it for a while. In the pauses of talk I listened for that rustling sound, but did not hear it again then. And after tea he began to write letters, while I discovered my room and unpacked my box.

The situation was beyond me. I was puzzled, distressed, and frightened. Unless I was greatly mistaken my stepfather was on the verge of a mental breakdown as complete as that which, within four months, had put twenty years on to his age. This prospect was sufficiently alarming; but there lay more behind. Those senses which are not of the canonical five were already exploring behind the scenes, warning me that what the eye could see was but a small part of the truth. I had wondered how I could best combat my stepfather's delusions: I soon began to ask myself if they were delusions at all. The influence of the house was upon me also. I found myself peering about my room, listening, and walking on tip-toe. I was prodigiously thankful for the universal glare of the electric globes. Upstairs, of course, several rooms were empty of furniture, but all their doors were open and all their lights switched on. Outside, where the sunset glow was waning, other lights shone in a friendly way across the road. Near at hand I could hear the laughter and music of a children's party. I remember that I was shaken by a sudden spasm of anger against myself. It was the common-sense outlook, born of a public-school life, protesting against my natural inclination toward the imaginative and mystical. I asked myself indignantly what I was afraid of, and I could not answer; but I was afraid. After all, I was only a boy in years; and this house was not as other houses. I had felt it once before: I felt it more strongly now. More strongly every minute, as I stood in my bedroom and looked down upon the crisp, white road and the opposite lights, I was oppressed by the feeling that these things were not really there at all—a feeling so definite that I rubbed my eyes, expecting, when I opened them again, to see nothing but the gloom of that great shadow which, I felt sure, lay all about the house. I remember also how I looked upward and was genuinely surprised to see, instead of the dark, sinister canopy, the myriad winter stars shining blue and cold. And not once, but several times, I could have sworn I heard, close at hand, sounds like the creaking of branches and the passage of wind among leaves.

I think I succeeded in putting a tolerable face upon my fears. I whistled, and sang, and was very noisy over my unpacking; and then I walked through all the empty rooms, treading aggressively on their bare planking. I confess I shirked the attics, which were not lighted by electricity. Coming downstairs again, I sallied out into the front garden, where the tangled bracken shone silver under the stars, to see what I could make of the houses on either side. I hoped I might gather some idea of their inmates—might perhaps catch a glimpse, through a window, of some male figure of a large and reassuring kind. It would hearten me to know that a capable person was at hand in case of need. But here my little breath of hope was instantly stifled; for both houses were to let, and patently empty.

I was greatly dashed by this discovery. It was to no purpose that I saw across the road cheerful lights, and even heard the voices of people. There was something peculiarly sinister and suggestive about those blank, staring, next-door windows—something that made me feel very lonely and young and helpless. Before a sudden impulse, however, I nerved myself to step across the fern-choked grass plot and peer over the nearest dividing fence into the deserted garden on the other side. It was well illuminated by a handy street lamp and the blaze of light from our own front windows; and it was plain, by the way the weeds had overrun it, that the house had been empty for some time. But I saw more than this: these weeds were the ordinary garden stuff: of bracken there was not a trace, and there were hardly any dead leaves. Yet, on the other side of a trumpery fence, I was standing knee-deep in withered bracken, on a perfect carpet of oak-leaves that crackled as I moved. . . .

I returned hastily to the path. I did not brave the greater expanse of frosted undergrowth that lay between me and the second deserted garden. I knew what I should find there; or, rather, what I should not find.

I went back into the house and rejoined my stepfather in the dining-room. He was still writing. During the last few days, as he presently explained apologetically, he had been feeling so unwell that his correspondence had fallen into serious arrears. Fortified by my company (as he put it) he now felt equal to attacking the great pile of letters he had brought back that day from the office.

'It's a compliment to you,' said he; 'though rather a left-handed one, I'm afraid.'

He so plainly brightened during the evening that I tried to persuade myself that his breakdown was largely a matter of nerves and solitude, and would be permanently mended now that he had company. During dinner (which was execrably served and cooked) he was in almost jovial spirits. At times I forgot the terrible manner in which he had aged; and I was never so near liking him. I was within an ace of confiding to him my private desires for the future, but shrank from disturbing his new-found peace of mind. I am glad now that I did so. He even spoke jestingly of the house, and was extremely amusing in his account of old Mrs. Simmonds, who kept popping in and out of the room like a witch in a pantomime. Serious matters, however, were still tacitly shelved. And as soon as the meal was finished, and we had smoked a cigarette together (a great concession, so far as I was concerned), he turned to his letters again and wrote for the rest of the evening.

I occupied myself (or pretended to do so) with such books as I could find; but in fact, with the cessation of our talk and laughter, the old sense of oppression returned. I caught myself looking again for the shadow that was not there. The mutter of the fire and the scratch of my stepfather's pen seemed to merge into the soft rustle that I now knew so well. But I was tired, and for a good part of the while I must have dozed, oscillating upon those marches of sleep where one's dreams are half coherent thoughts, and one's thoughts half incoherent dreams. And once I fell sheer asleep, as I suppose, and dreamed very clearly of a man, dressed in black and silver, with knee-breeches and ruffles, who paced slowly down a long avenue of trees, carrying in his hand a coil of rope. I recognised him as my stepfather, and then I woke up profoundly terrified, though of what I could not say. The noise of the wind among the trees, which I heard in my dream, hummed all around me. But it was only my stepfather rattling his papers. He was yawning and stretching, and the fire was falling low.

'Enough done!' said he briskly. 'We will step out and post these, and then to bed. I feel I shall sleep sound to-night, thank God!'

The pillar-box stood no more than a hundred yards down the road, and we left the hall-door open. Mrs. Simmonds had long since retired to her room. The night was very cold and still, the sky black as sable velvet, the stars extraordinarily brilliant. Here and there a few lighted windows still shone in a companionable way; but for the most part people were abed, and their houses

cold and dark ; and Oak-Dene, blazing from every pane like a chandelier, was an incongruous and rather startling feature in the scene.

We were walking back up the garden path when my stepfather clutched me by the arm.

‘What’s that ?’ he whispered fiercely : ‘What’s that ?’

‘What ? Where ? . . .’ I stammered, seeing nothing alarming.

He pointed at the open door, and I saw his finger jump as if it were palsied.

‘Hanging there !’ he said, still with the same whispered rapidity of utterance : ‘Hanging there, in the hall. . . .’

‘There is nothing there,’ I said, after peering a moment. The hall, brightly lighted, was empty so far as I could see. But my stepfather’s terror was infectious, and we stood together trembling, his hand still on my arm.

‘There is nothing there,’ I repeated more confidently.

He passed his hand across his eyes and drew a long breath. Then, after a pause, during which he stared into the hall :—

‘Nothing there . . . ?’ he echoed, speaking more to himself than to me ; ‘But I saw him ! I saw him ! . . . Hanging from the stairs there, in black and silver, with dead leaves in his hair. . . .’

I could feel my own hair moving on my head, I shook with cold and fright, and the gravelled path held me like a magnet. But now my stepfather dropped his hold and made a run into the hall, where he stood looking about him, his hands clenched by his sides. I plucked myself forward after him.

‘Oh, this is maddening !’ he said : ‘Am I mad, or . . . ?’

He turned on me with a lamentable, stricken face, seemed about to speak, shrugged his shoulders and passed into the dining-room. Unlocking the tantalus on the sideboard, he poured a little neat brandy into a couple of glasses and brought them out to where I still stood, scared and bewildered, glancing about.

‘Here, take this,’ he said : ‘I’m afraid I startled you. It’s my nerves ; they play the devil with me here. There’s nothing to be seen after all.’

The spirit, while it made me gasp, lighted at once a little flame of valour within me. I looked with more confidence and a certain new and fearful interest at the hall in which we stood. I remember thinking, prosaically enough, how characteristic it was of this type of house, where comfort and common-sense are sacrificed to display. Disproportionately large, it was square in shape, and the staircase

ran up two sides to become a balustraded landing or balcony on the third. It was this last junction that was visible, if the hall door was open, as one came up the garden path. I had wondered if some trick of shadow could have deceived my stepfather. Little was needed with his nerves so unstrung; but although there were shadows beneath the balcony, there was nothing that could suggest, even from a distance, a human figure.

I think it was only now, when I was examining this hall carefully for the first time, that I recognised another peculiar feature: namely, that all the permanent woodwork—moulding and casement and stair-rail—was of varnished oak. I call this peculiar because in every other room the defects of cheap Norwegian timber were only too conspicuous. Then, however, I remembered the great tree, whose limbs had once stretched far beyond the limits of the house. No doubt, finding the trunk too rotten to pay for removal, they had cut it up on the spot and used the sounder branches to give a meretricious air to that part of the building which would first meet the visitor's eye. I found afterwards that this was the correct explanation: it was also very characteristic. And from picturing that splendid spread of branch and leaf my thoughts were carried forward involuntarily to the trees of my dream a short while back. It had gone out of my mind; but now the whole scene of it leapt up with startling clarity, and the horror amid which I had woken went through my soul again like ice; for I saw how the figure of the dream, with its black and silver dress, and its coil of rope, fitted in with my stepfather's hallucination.

My head went round with all these mysteries. I turned half-angrily, half-despairingly to my stepfather, who was staring vacantly into the dark corner under the gallery. But I had no heart to speak of my own troubles when I looked at the pitiful wreck that, four months before, had been an upright, ruddy, confident man. His whitened hair was the real testimony to the evil that was in this house.

'Come,' he said suddenly, 'we had better shut the door.'

Turning to do so, he trod on something that crackled faintly.

'Faugh!' he muttered, stepping hastily aside. 'More of them!'

He had stepped on two or three withered oak leaves. I could only suppose that some light draught must have blown them in through the open door, although there was no wind that could be felt outside.

I must have looked rather forlorn and bewildered, for when he

had shut and bolted the door, he put his arm through mine in a sympathetic way and spoke with elaborate carelessness.

'A poor home-coming, I'm afraid,' he said again; 'but things will look different to-morrow morning. We must see what we can do. . . We'll plan some little dinners in town, and theatres after. I don't like this house, and that's a fact; but bogies? Pooh! Nerves, my boy, nerves! Mine are all on edge, and you've caught the infection. And now we'll have another drink, a mild one this time, and go to bed.'

I had never felt less inclined for bed, although I was very tired. But my stepfather was now making a determined effort to treat the situation as normal, and it was not for me to fail him. I talked bravely, drank a mild brandy and soda, and followed him upstairs.

'Leave your door open, if you like,' he said, when we stood on the landing; 'I always do: and then we can call out and reassure each other in the small hours. . . Well, good-night, my boy. I'm glad to have you back again. Sleep well, and don't worry about me.'

He spoke lightly enough, but there was weariness in his eyes. I was strongly moved, as much for his sake as for my own, to suggest that we should sleep together. I was beginning to understand what he had gone through alone in that house. But the habits of years are not to be broken in an hour. I was still diffident with him: still incredulous of the truth. I will confess without shame that I was afraid, but I did my best to act up to my code and imitate his indifferent manner. I felt proud of him that night; and now, as I picture him leaving me to face alone a persecution the more terrible in that it must have been utterly incomprehensible to him, I am still more proud. With all his limitations my stepfather was game, every inch.

I got into bed with even more than my usual rapidity. I had provided myself with many books, so that if sleep would not come, I could spend the whole night in reading. But, in fact, I was far more tired than I thought. I heard my stepfather call out a final 'good night!' and then get into bed; and not long after this, in spite of my fears and my book, I must have fallen asleep. I wonder now how I managed to do so; but I suppose at seventeen healthy exhaustion will triumph over most obstacles.

I woke—or half-woke—once in the night-time. I have a memory of opening my eyes and finding the electric light still blazing, and of marvelling at this because I believed myself to be in my dormitory

at school. The wind seemed to be blowing strongly, and I could hear the creak and rustle of the trees outside my window there. And I remember a vague feeling of trouble, a feeling that I ought to get up and go somewhere, or investigate something. . . . But in a minute these sensations were dissolved in a dreamless sleep again.

I woke a second time about seven in the morning. I found myself sitting up in bed, very wide awake indeed. The electric light shone weakly in the brightness of a glorious dawn; and birds were singing all about the house. I was aware of an extraordinary lightness of heart, as though some great trouble had just passed away. As I lay thinking and wondering, I began to remember all that had happened the night before. It did not frighten me now; but it did not seem unreal, as strange overnight experiences often do. It interested me greatly. I determined to talk the whole thing over with my stepfather in the calm, rational light of morning. We have no nerves—or ought to be unconscious of them—at that time of day. And then, thinking rather shamefacedly of my panic, I suddenly understood that my new lightness of heart was not solely due to the daylight: there was another cause: the shadow on the house was definitely gone. It was like the clearing of the atmosphere after a thunderstorm. Gloom, and phantom trees, and phantom noises, were blown away, and the house was sweet and clean, like any other house.

I was so delighted with this discovery and with the brightness of the morning and the singing birds, that I got instantly out of bed and into a dressing-gown, and went softly across the landing to see how my stepfather was, and if he was asleep. On my way my foot struck against something that lay on the floor of the gallery. It was the bight of a stout rope, that was made fast to the newel-post at the junction of the stairs with the landing. I looked over the balustrade, without premonition, without fear. I was only curious. But when I saw what was below me, I screamed like a woman. For now in truth a body was hanging in the corner of the hall; and in the silver hair, just beneath my feet, were withered oak leaves. . . .

DOUGLAS G. BROWNE.

SHAKESPEARE'S GRANDDAUGHTER.

How little we know about Shakespeare's last descendant! The little, indeed, that we know of all his kindred gradually dwindles into nothing as we reach the half-century from his death.

He had only three children. Susanna was born in 1583, and the twins, Hamnet and Judith, were born in 1585 (as we count it now). Hamnet died in 1596. One likes to think that Shakespeare came home from London to close his eyes, or at least was a silent mourner at his funeral. We are sure he thought of him when he drew Mamillius, and young Marcius, and little Will Page.

In 1607 Susanna married Dr. John Hall, a physician of eminence, a Master of Arts, maybe of Paris, and a man of note in Stratford—burgess, churchwarden, what not—and a scholar too. No doubt Dr. Hall was somewhat of a Puritan; we know he entertained a Puritan preacher; and he could not have enjoyed his father-in-law's little digs at such folk, if indeed he condescended to read playbooks. Whether he read Drayton, one knows not, but certainly he gave him physic. His diary saith: 'Mr. Drayton, an excellent poet, labouring of a tertian, was cured by the following treatment'—(those of us who live in the fens would be very glad to know if that treatment might avail now). Perhaps Hall took his father-in-law for judge of the great ballad of Agincourt, and heard, before it was published, of 'Polyolbion.' He was a worthy man, and he and his wife were executors of the poet's will, and his residuary legatees.

Their only child was Elizabeth, baptized on February 21, 1608. When she was eighteen she married Thomas Nash, whom his monument calls Esquire. After Shakespeare's death the Halls had lived with his widow at New Place. She died, the one who could have told us most and has told us nothing, in 1623. Dr. Hall died in 1635. And then Thomas Nash and his wife lived with Mrs. Hall—indeed Nash speaks of New Place as his house—till Nash died in 1647.

Mrs. Hall died in 1649. Then Elizabeth Nash was left alone, the owner of Shakespeare's house and property.

But, meanwhile, what of his daughter Judith? She was married—not till she was thirty-one—to Thomas Quiney, in

February 1616, two months only before her father's death. He left her the large sum of three hundred pounds in his will. Judith's husband was younger than herself. (Did she know what her father had said of such a match? It might have been a prophecy of her fate.) His mother kept a tavern, and he himself, though a burgess and chamberlain, and a man who knew French to boot, took to tavern ways, and died in obscurity, probably in London, one knows not when.

The Quineys had three children, all boys. Shakespeare, born at the end of the year 1616, lived less than six months. Richard, born in 1618, and Thomas, born two years later, both died in 1639. Their mother survived to be seventy-seven, and died in 1662.

Elizabeth, the poet's granddaughter, was now his only descendant. On June 5, 1649 (so Malone told in a letter which recorded the facts he had picked up at Northampton), she had married a second time. Her husband was John Barnard of Abington, whom Charles II. knighted in 1661. Lady Barnard, one would think, must have had, not only her father's interesting diary, but some manuscripts of her grandfather's. What became of them?

On January 29, 1670, she made her will, and a very precise one it was. She died less than a month later.

Last autumn, when I was at the fine old church of Abington, now a suburb of Northampton, whose windows (in a style all architects abhor) no true antiquary would destroy, I lingered in the south aisle and read the words on a big stone slab that lay at my feet:

Hic jacent exuviae generosissimi
 Viri Johannis Bernard, militis.
 Patre, Avo, Atavo, Tritavo, aliis
 Progenitorib.—per ducentos et
 Amplius annos huius oppidi de
 Abingdon Dominus insignis. Qui
 Fato cessit undeseptuagesimo
 Aetatis suae anno quinto nonas
 Martii Annoque a partu B. Virginis
 MDCLXXIII.

It was the grave of Sir John Barnard, knighted in 1661 by Charles II., who on June 5, 1649, had married Elizabeth, widow of Thomas Nash of Stratford, daughter of Dr. John and Mrs. Susanna Hall, and granddaughter of William Shakespeare. Sir John was a great man, one sees, at Abington, but his wife was nothing

accounted of till the nineteenth century, when a loyal Shakespearean added these words on the stone :

'Also to Elizabeth, second wife
of Sir John Bernard, Knight
(Shakespeare's granddaughter and
last of the direct descendants of
the poet), who departed this life
on the 17th February MDCLXIX.

Aged 64 years.

Mors est janua vite.

Then I turned to the register. There is the last record of Shakespeare's last descendant. 'Madam Elizabeth Bernard, wife of Sir John Bernard, K^t, was buried 17^o Feb^r, 1669.'

I wondered what manner of woman she was, for in spite of Halliwell-Phillipps and Mrs. Stopes, in spite of the very determined and masculine documents associated with her name, and in spite of her father's record of her juvenile ailments and his clever treatment of them, we know little indeed about her.

I continued to ponder all that evening; and when I looked out of the window of my bedroom in the delightful rectory, over the wide prospect of the Nene Valley, with the great tower of Earl's Barton, 'the swan-song of Anglo-Saxon architecture,' as the Commendatore Rivoira calls it, before me, and the distant church of Cogenhoe to end the view, I wondered if Shakespeare's last descendant had looked over those bright fields at sunset too, and seen those ancient churches, which must have seemed as old to her then as they do to me now.

And when I had gone upstairs to bed I sat long thinking over the fire, till I turned my head and saw an oak cupboard in the corner of the room which I had not noticed before. I went to it and opened it, and there was the first edition of Hooker's 'Ecclesiastical Polity' (with no title-page, alas!). I sat reading it by the fire till all the sounds of the house were hushed, and only the wind sang in the trees outside. At last I turned a leaf, and there dropped out a brown manuscript, the hand quite legible, the ink not dim.

'It was about noon that I was called to my Lady Bernard, in the house by the church. She would often call herself a church-woman and say it was because she lived by the church, but not so

well as master parson, and she would say her grandfather said it, but I could never see the wit. I was called about noon, but I could not go till dusk was coming on, in the January even, when even begins so soon. Her husband was away with the hounds at Sywell or mayhap at Overstone : I know not. It was dark, and I going away, ere he came back.

'As I came into her chamber she said, in her high voice, like a cracked fiddle, as my wife would always say, "Is this master doctor or master parson, body-curer or soul-curer?" "Madam," I said, "I am your ladyship's rector, ready, so you will, to do the priest's office for you." "Nay," quoth she, "I will have none of that. I am of my good father's mind. He was *medicus peritissimus*, and my mother said he knew as much of the soul as of the body, and he loved not the priest, but only the preacher. But my grandfather thought not so. Many a time have I heard him say, as I played with my bauble at his feet, "Nay, son John, I will have none of thy black pigs." And my father would shake his head sadly and yet smile and say, "Why, father Shakespeare, will you never learn to be wise?" "Betake thee to thy simples," I have heard my grandfather answer, "for in good sooth thou art a simple man."

"Madam," I began, but the lady would not hear me. I could see her eye flash and her cheek flush as she sat up in bed. "Why should I not live these ten years?" she said. "My aunt Judith was but three years off four-score when her end came. I am not so long passed three-score. And I am not much above the age of good Tom Nash, God rest his soul : he was my true love." Now I knew that she spoke of her first spouse ; but Sir John Bernard, worthy knight, was not by.

'Then she spake softly, as though she spake to one that I saw not, and would not have me hear what she said to him.

"Ah, Tom, my good lad, how late it is I join thee ! First marry for love : then marry for estate. But then that is not all men's lot, or women's. But thou and I did wed for love."

'Then she spake slowly, as though she read from a book. And this is what she said :

"Here resteth the body of Thomas Nashe, Esquier. He married the daughter of John Hall, gentleman."

"Yes, we were ever of that rank. And my grandfather said to me, "Bess, see thou mate not below thy degree, whether in estate, years, or wit ; and search not for one below thy wit, for verily thou mayest not find him." He was in good sooth a merry man.

'And my father was a gentleman, not an apothecary. It is no shame to men of good degree to cure the ills that flesh is heir to.

'One day my father was giving a mighty evil potion to a cobbler, who must needs know all of which it was confected, and say how that it was the seducers of the Court, waxing worse and worse, and the regrators, and the monopoly men, that made the price of drugs so high, and that for his part he had as soon be cured with a powder of dried newts' ears; and much more in that vein. But my grandsire Shakespeare was waiting to go a-riding with my father, and, as he stood and listened to the fellow, he gnashed his teeth, and stamped his foot, and said—"Son John, why wilt thou give thy precious wits to the curing of fools?" And my father answered, with one of his smiles, that we saw so seldom move his strait lip, "My poverty and not my will consents." "Marry, man," said my grandfather, "wilt thou poison the fellow?"

'May be, if my father had lived, my Thomas had not died. They were ever near akin in heart. When Tom was born, my father was no more than a score of years old; and when he was ten years he would often sit upon my father's knee; and the next year he would carry me out, in my baby's clothes, as tenderly as any nurse. And now: "Here resteth." That was ever his word: "resteth." God rest his soul.'

'Then:

' "After life's fitful fever he sleeps well."

'Methought I knew those words. But my lady Bernard did not say more like them. Only she began of a sudden to speak Latin:

' "*Fata manent omnes,*"

two or three times; and then

' "*Si peritura paras.*"

'Afterwards, when I read in the book of Sir William Dugdale the herald, I found the lines, on the grave of Thomas Nashe in the Church of the Holy Trinity, at Stratford: which he prints thus:

' "*Fata manent omnes: hunc non virtute carentem*

Ut neq: divitiis abstulit atra dies.

Abstulit, at refert lux ultima; siste, viator,

Si peritura paras, per mala parva peris."

And, indeed, though maybe the Stratford schoolmaster wrote them, I do not think these be good verses at all. I wrote many verses myself in my youth, and a Latin elegy on my wife, of which she

was mighty proud ; but my children do not understand it. Shame how this age is decayed in learning ! ”

‘ My lady said no more ; and her eyes closed. Then I saw she slept ; and I sat by.

‘ When she opened her eyes again there was no sight in them, but she spoke quickly and as though she walked with one behind her, pressing behind upon her steps. “ Ah ! the Queen,” she said. “ The good Queen, Papist though she be ; how she smiles ; how those curls on her brow set off her face, and God knows my straight locks hang like flax upon a distaff. For three days she rested in my house, my mother’s house, the house of my grandfather, the house that my husband shall have now, but no kin of his after him. And when I kissed her hand it was like the softest silk. Queen Mary, our martyr’s wife ; God bless her ; I commend me to her as I die. For do I not remember how we rode out that July morning, and she must needs have me, on grey Capilet, ride at her side, till we came to the streets of Kineton, which not a year before had run with blood ? And up the hill we looked, and there was as gallant an array as one could ever see ; and ‘ That,’ said my sovereign lady, ‘ is Rupert ’—and it was he who had lost the fight, they said, where he now stood, because he would chase the crop-ears down to the brook, hard by where the Queen rested to await his coming.

“ And the bells rang, and from the church tower waved a great flag, and the little maids strawed flowers in the way, and their mothers looked from the windows and shook their kerchiefs, and the parson stood in the way and said ‘ God save our lady Queen Mary ! ’ but methought he looked sourly on her because she was a Frenchwoman and the Pope’s woman too. But I know that when we went on towards the battle-field and saw where men had fought so bitterly, and when one told her of Captain Henry Kingsmill and his gallant death, and Captain John Smith of Skilts and his brave deed, I saw the tears stand in her eyes.” ’

‘ And indeed my Lady Bernard was ever of a loyal mind towards our sovereign lord the King, who had knighted Sir John. And had not King Charles our martyr been a great reader of her grandfather’s plays ?

‘ But I could not stay to hear these Canterbury tales ; and it was not till after the attorney had been with her and made her ladyship’s will that I came again.

‘ It was some days after this that I was sent for once more, and sat warming myself in the oak parlour for an hour till Sir

John came downstairs, and said her ladyship would speak with me. And so I talked with her, and found she was not of her father's but of her grandfather's mind. The particulars are not for paper. And the next day she was houseled. And the day after she died.

'She was a lady who delighted in her dignity; when King Charles knighted Master Bernard, men said, and women more also, that it was because of her, and that she had been herself to London Town and told him to his face that her grandfather was a mightier man than his. They say too that King Charles said he was of one mind with her therein, and that he loved "The Merry Wives of Windsor" more than any Basilicon Doron, and thought Sir Toby had more right on his side in the matter of tobacco than King James. (And indeed my lady Bernard would herself sing, not too tunefully, that most tuneful song, "Tobacco's but an Indian weed.") But, for all she was so proud, my wife says her aunt Judith kept a tavern, and her grandfather was a butcher's boy. How this may be I know not, but I remember she would speak of her aunt Judith (who married Mr. Thomas Quyny, the brother of Mr. Quyny of the Red Lyon in Bucklersbury, where I lay a night or two when I went to see my Lord Bishop Juxon) as though she were but a silly body. "Judith," I have heard her say, "had her Holofernes, but my aunt's man was Goodman Dull, and there was not much of Love's Labour lost about it." What she meant I cannot tell.

'Once I heard some strangers, friends of Sir John's whom he had bidden to dinner, ask her if she remembered her grandfather Shakespeare, and she told them a long tale of how rich he was, and how much respected in the town of Stratford (which I take to be but a beggarly place at best), and how many coaches there were at his funeral, and how she was his heiress, and more in that fashion. Of the which they took no heed, but one of them, a young gallant, said pertly, "Pray, madam, do you not remember anything your grandfather said to you? For he was a great man for wit in his day, and, Will Davenant hath it, a very merry fellow too." "Sir," she said, "I know nothing of Will Davenant save that his father kept the Crown alehouse in Oxford, and my grandmother would never hear his name, or his mother's, with patience. But my grandfather, I would have you know, was not a merry man but one of weight and wit, and could be sad as night; and he would tell me I was the only merry one in his family, since my mother married a Puritan. And when we walked across

the fields to Billesley (where afterwards I married Sir John) he would sometimes trip and turn about, and then make me sing an old song :

“Jog on, jog on the footpath way,
And merrily hent the stile-a.
Your merry heart goes all the day ;
Your sad tires in a mile-a.”

And then he would say “Marry, I must have been a mile already,” and ask me if I saw my aunt Judith in the hay.

‘And then she said, quite softly and sadly, so that none heard her save I, “And the night when he was dead I heard my grandam say through her tears, ‘Ah, my Will, there was never so brave a lad as thou, nor one ever that loved so : and now thou hast left thine old wife to see her way home without a star.’”’

Here there was a rent in the paper, and below that was written, ‘By me, John Howes, rector of Abington and Master of Arts.’

Next morning I went to church through the brisk morning air, and looked again upon the Barnard stone. And after breakfast I asked my kind host about the manuscripts of his predecessor from 1652 to 1685, Master John Howes, who was so true to his Protestant upbringing that he died as soon as King James the Papist came to the throne. But he could tell me nothing ; and when we went upstairs to my bedroom we could not find them in the cupboard, because we could not find the cupboard itself.

Does this simple record need any notes ? Hardly so, I think. Only, perhaps, that Queen Henrietta Maria did stay at New Place with Mrs. Hall and her daughter, then the wife of Thomas Nash, in July 1643, and rode to meet Prince Rupert at the foot of Edgehill.

And indeed all that Master John Howes wrote (if you are to believe all this) about his parishioner at Abington, so far as it relates to the facts of her life and of her will, has full support from the authentic records.

But I wish we knew more of Shakespeare’s last descendant, who was eight years old when he died.

W. H. HUTTON.

THE SON WHO SAID 'I GO NOT.'

A TALE OF KITCHENER'S ARMY.

GORDON MERITT had always been looked upon by his friends—and, in this respect, he fully agreed with them—as one of the doubly fortunate, in having been born both lucky and rich. It seemed as if his fairy godmothers had endowed him in their wisest as well as kindest mood. The baby in a family of girls, his father had died before the child could miss him, and his mother had found it no easy task to save him from being spoiled by his adoring sisters. But she was a woman of parts, and the boy grew up sweet-tempered and kind-hearted. His handsome face and delightful manners attracted a host of friends, and in due course Society welcomed him with open arms.

At school and at Oxford he achieved no great distinction, but it was well understood that the cause was lack of ambition, not of ability. It was the same with sport. He played football and cricket for fun, not for fame. At the Union he did exert himself, and he was reckoned among the half-dozen orators of his standing.

As time went on, he settled down to the life of a country gentleman with a flat in town. His mother was now advanced in years, and the eldest daughter, a widow with two children, had come back to live in the old home. To these children Gordon was devoted, and his mother often sighed to think what an admirable husband and model father was neglecting his duties and missing his opportunities.

Perhaps the truth was that he was a little too comfortable. With ample but not extravagant means at his disposal, he was able to ride every hobby and indulge every taste. He was liberal in his gifts to the Church and to charity, generous to his friends and dependants. He was emphatically a man who found life good, and the world a very pleasant place.

Was there a fly in the ointment? Well, hardly a fly—call it, if you will, a gnat, a midge, something small enough to be elusive, but not too insignificant to sting.

Two or three times in his life he had suspected himself of a well-hidden, deep-seated cowardice. He had not the least reason to suppose that anyone else shared the suspicion, and in his own mind

it rose only rarely and at long intervals. Once, notably, in his undergraduate days, it had forced itself upon him. He had joined a reading party in a little Devonshire fishing village. There was a particular beach where the current was strong and treacherous, and they were all warned against bathing there. One evening, as they were strolling along in the half-light, they heard screams, and a boy came running, dripping, and panting. He pointed to the danger-spot, and cried out that 'Jake' was drowning. Cole and Roughton threw off their coats and rushed down headlong into the water. Gordon had run for a boat. It was the wisest thing to do and the best, he told himself, in the interests of the drowning boy and his own friends. But deep down in his consciousness was the sense that he had funked, he had refused to risk his life for this unknown, foolhardy little Jake. As it turned out, his boat came in most useful, and he was praised for his coolness and common sense. The boy was saved, but Cole, who was the first to go in for him, had a very narrow escape and was brought out almost at the last gasp. And ever since that evening Gordon had, at intervals, envied Cole and cursed himself for a poltroon.

It was a bad symptom that he had no wish to be tried again, no longing for an opportunity of rehabilitating himself in his own esteem. Life was so good—by which he meant so pleasant—that his one desire was for things to go on as they were. And this desire, even to himself, he only called contentment; he did not recognise it as cowardice in a domino.

Then came the war. Gordon was the Unionist candidate for a Scottish county division, and soon after the Servian assassination he went down and delivered a thoughtful and eloquent speech on England's duty in a European crisis. She was to be firm, he said, but not provocative; to trust in God and keep her powder dry.

The shadows darkened swiftly, terribly, and, while to most Englishmen it still seemed incredible, England was at war. The national calamity and what seemed to Gordon the crowning joy of his life came almost together. On the Saturday before Germany declared war against Russia, he became engaged to the dearest girl in the world.

Soon came the call for recruits. One by one, old college friends and club acquaintances disappeared. Polo, cricket, golf, billiards, bridge, all gave of their best to Kitchener.

'There'll be no one left to play a decent game with, but kids and greybeards,' said Gordon to the vicar.

'And they'll be called up before we're through with it,' answered Mr. Elthorne, with a straight look that Gordon did not like.

Some of his friends went further than looking.

'Hullo! Meritt,' said Charlie Burton, 'got a commission yet? I've just been writing to the adjutant.'

'Lucky man!' answered Gordon. 'I'm tied down at home for the present, worse luck.'

It was quite true, he told himself. He *was* tied. If anything happened to him, it would kill his mother, and besides, there was Evelyn. He was as good as married. Indeed, this war would be a good reason for hurrying on the marriage. He was the head of the family and it was his clear duty to 'carry on.' He would give generously, lavishly, and not money only. Already he was on half a dozen committees. It was all work that must be done by somebody. Why, even Kitchener had to stop at home.

But, all the time, he knew it was make-believe. Death scared him—that was the bald, blunt truth of it. Cole would be in the thick of it, while he—was fetching a boat.

As the days went by and the appeals for men grew louder, he developed a morbid sensitiveness. In every chance word, or careless glance, he detected deliberate reproach and insult.

At home he talked a great deal of giving, working, organising, and no one uttered a syllable about his going. He had hoped that his mother would try to make him promise not to volunteer, but she never even approached the subject.

When he suggested to Evelyn an early marriage, her cheek flushed, her eyes lit up.

'Oh, Gordon, why?' she asked and there was a fervour, an eagerness, in her voice that stabbed him with sudden pain.

'Well, dearest,' he answered lamely, 'in such times as these——'

The glow faded from her eyes.

'Oh, no, Gordon,' she said. 'We oughtn't to think of ourselves at such a time.'

'I believe they both want me to go!' he groaned.

He thought of his happy life with all its comforts and pleasures and refinements, his library, his pictures and art collections, and his gardens. Why should he throw all these away, and let himself be blotted out in obedience to a panic cry? He was no peace-at-any-price man, but fighting should be done by those who had the bent for it. To him it would be hell, whether he were on the winning or the losing side. And he shivered with an actual physical chill

at the thought of Death's obscene hand driving him forth from Evelyn and Paradise into the cold, black, outer darkness.

The more he considered the situation, the clearer grew his conviction that there was only one way out—he must persuade Evelyn to an immediate marriage. Then, together, they could do far more for their country than if he flung away his life in the fighting line.

She and her mother shared a flat looking over Regent's Park. The afternoon following his conversation with her, he set out to call upon them, timing his visit so as to reach the flat a quarter of an hour before tea. Yesterday he had boggled, but to-day he felt sure of his ability to convince her.

As he crossed Oxford Street, he noticed by a clock that it was later than he had thought. On the opposite side of the road a taxi was coming slowly towards Baker Street. He hailed it and started across the road to where it had pulled up and was waiting. Just before he reached it, while he was still in the road, a private car, unseen, unheard, travelling at an illegal rate, swooped down upon him. His eyes, fixed upon his taxi, suddenly caught the gleam of the reflectors in the unlighted lamps of the stranger. The car was so close upon him that he had not the faintest chance of even trying to escape. 'It's all up,' he said to himself. 'Now I know what it's like.' The next moment he felt himself flung off his feet and hurled he knew not whither. It seemed as though some giant hand had him by the throat and were grinding his head against a garden wall. He could see the separate bricks quite distinctly, and he thought what an interminable length of wall there was—when would it come to an end?

Then, slowly, he turned over on his side and began to get up. To his amazement he found he could stand steadily enough—nothing was broken. Only one thing troubled him—had he, or had he not, brought his umbrella with him? He looked round carefully and saw his hat a little distance off, but no sign of the umbrella.

It was Sunday, and there were few people about, but the driver of the car, which he could see some way off, came running to him.

'Are you all right, sir?' he asked anxiously.

'Quite right,' answered Gordon, wondering whether he ought to apologise.

'Sure?' persisted the driver. 'I hooted and hooted, but I couldn't pull up in time.'

'I'm all right,' said Gordon, polishing his hat with his sleeve.

'That's a good thing,' exclaimed the driver, and walked away, while Gordon opened his taxi door and got in. His neck was beginning to feel very stiff, his right leg ached badly, and when he put his hand to his hair he found it wet and matted.

'Stop at the first doctor's you pass,' he told the driver.

'You're one of the luckiest men in London,' said the doctor when he had finished dabbing iodine on the grazes. 'You'd be worth your weight in gold in the trenches. But you mustn't crow too soon. You'll feel the shock to-morrow. Go to bed now and keep your feet to a hot bottle.'

'Something else to do first,' he said to himself with a distinct chuckle as the taxi bore him back to his rooms. The doctor had thought his cheerfulness assumed with an effort. It was nothing of the kind. He felt as if a great, evil-smelling burden had dropped from his back. A new, delightful sense of freedom and alertness and sweet, fresh air made his stiff leg seem quite a good joke. In that fraction of a second between the first gleam of the car's reflectors and the shock that had flung him along the road, he had solved a problem that had teased and worried and fretted him for twenty years and more. He had looked Death full in the face and had seen in a moment that there was nothing there for a man to be afraid of.

An hour later, limping, stiff-necked, but smiling and absolutely happy, he found Evelyn alone in the drawing-room.

'You *are* late, Gordon,' she exclaimed. 'What *have* you been doing?'

'I'm trying for a commission in Kitchener's little lot,' he answered. 'I've just been writing to the adjutant.'

B. PAUL NEUMAN.

A CAVALRYMAN AT THE FRONT.

August 15, Saturday.—'Der Tag,' the toast of the German Army! If it is the day for them, surely it is even more so for us, for at last we shall be able to see the results of our training and test the fighting qualities of our voluntary army against those of the 'great' (?) conscript army of Germany, and as to the result! As Tommy Atkins would say, 'Are we downhearted?' No! I fancy our little volunteer army will be a shock to William and his hordes: however, future events will prove.

Called at 3 A.M. and hurried to barracks, where I found 'C' squadron had started for the docks to embark, but got a 'phone message to delay my departure from barracks for two hours, as transport was not alongside, and not expected in till 6 A.M., the time I ought to have embarked. Rather a nuisance, this delay. Wish I had known earlier; a couple of hours more in bed would have been A1. Had a jolly good breakfast. Got another 'phone message from the embarkation people telling me not to start embarking until 12 o'clock. Ordered squadron to parade at 10 A.M. London post arrived; among others, quite a charming letter from 'Cox' [Army bankers—Editor], 'hoping I should return safely,' &c. A good patriotic man, Cox, evidently *not* losing his nerve. Felt encouraged by Cox's letter, so paid some bills to fill in the time. 9.50 A.M.—Squadron has fallen in, and V. gone on parade. What a grand sight a mobilised squadron is! Can't help feeling jolly proud to command such a magnificent body of men. Hope to goodness I am capable of doing the lads full justice. 10 A.M.—Went on parade. Inspected the squadron; everything absolutely perfect, and every man as sober as a judge. The men ARE 'playing the game.' Started off for the docks. An enthusiastic send-off from barracks. Beastly ride to the docks. Why do corporations pave their streets with 'setts'? Horses slipping about all over the place. Cheering crowds and small boys with flags don't improve matters. On arrival at docks found 'C' just finishing their embarkation, so we started at once and we were 'all aboard' in record time. All our wives down watching. May got a lunch from the Captain. We are messing by squadrons, so we had squadron lunches on deck, inviting the wives. V. is our squadron Mess President. No food is provided by the ship. V. gave us an excellent lunch, and as May did herself well at our lunch I gather

the ship's food is not up to much. We had tea parties also. About 5.30 p.m. Mrs. C. and May decided they would go, as did most of the women. They were awfully brave. Nasty business, this good-byeing. Felt so sorry for the wives; much worse for them, staying—we have all the excitement. We cast off at 6 p.m. Great excitement just as we were starting. The ship's cook tried to come aboard by a rope ladder; he was more than 'half seas over' and absolutely disregarded the simple and essential rule of holding on to the ladder—result, he fell between the ship and the quay. A sailor went down and fished him out. Wonderful effect cold water has on people in his condition. 'Firebrand' and I share a cabin; the mess stores are also in it—not much room. Went round all the horse and troop decks. Dinner at 7 p.m. Smoked and talked; to bed at 11 p.m. Lovely night.

August 16, Sunday.—A lovely day; sea like oil. Got up about 6.30, after a cup of tea, and had a cigarette on deck. Only one bath on the ship, and that only cold sea-water. No fresh water available on account of the horses. Saw the horses watered and fed. Breakfast at 8 a.m. During the morning we paraded by squadrons, when the Colonel read the King's message, also K. of K.'s. Great enthusiasm over the former; men cheered like mad. Mid-day stables. Went round dinners—the men awfully cheery. After lunch smoked, read, and slept. We passed a battleship steaming hard for Plymouth; this is the first sight of the Navy we have had after being over twenty hours at sea. Looks as if the German fleet was 'bottled,' as we have no escort. Evening stables. Had a chat with my N.C.O.s. Dinner 7.30 p.m., V. doing us well. An excellent dinner and Pommery '04. With coffee we opened a bottle of our '65 brandy—our table quite popular! We discussed the South African War, &c., after dinner. About 9.30 p.m. we were all rather startled by the report of a gun and the ringing of the engine-room telephones. Rushed on deck and found we were held up by a French destroyer, which played her search-light all over us. It was a weird sight, as the actual boat, though only about 150 yards from us, was hardly visible, as there was not a glimmer of a light on her. After having satisfied herself that we were 'all right' we were allowed to proceed to our destination, at present unknown, except to the Captain. Bed about 11 p.m.

August 17, Monday.—Up about 6 a.m. to find we are anchored. The mystery of our destination is solved—it is Havre. We took our pilot aboard and went into the docks, and were 'tied up' about 11 a.m. and started disembarking the horses at once. All the

horses were off the ship in 1 hour 40 minutes ; the naval disembarking staff said it was the smartest bit of work they had ever seen. Everything clear and we were saddled up ready to move to the Rest Camp by 2 P.M. In the sheds the French had arranged a coffee stall—excellent coffee. I had two glasses and some top-hole bread. Why can't one get coffee and bread as good in England ?

We marched to our Rest Camp at a place called Bléville, about four or five miles from the docks. A most inspiring reception from the inhabitants. 'Vive l'Angleterre !' 'Vive la France !' and everyone begged for a 'souvenir.' Most of the men were minus their badges on arrival at the camp. After getting our horse-lines down and settling the men, the C.O. said a few very appropriate words to each squadron about their behaviour in general, and to the French army in particular. My men cheered him like mad—he is most awfully popular, and deservedly so.

Most of us went into Havre for dinner and had a real good one at the Grand Hotel. As it was closed by martial law at 9 P.M., we were back in camp early and went to bed.

Our mobilisation and transport over here have been more than successful ; not a hitch anywhere, everything up to time and not a horse scratched.

August 18, Tuesday.—Up about 6.30 A.M. and had a stroll round the horses ; they look A1, and none the worse for the journey. An excellent breakfast at special tent run by an enterprising Frenchman, at a cost of two francs. Don't fancy he made much profit out of me. Sent the horses to exercise ; no lameness. G. and I found a clover-field close by, and sent the men to gather a lot, and the gees had a good blow-out. Finished stables about 12. Went into Havre for *déjeuner*—excellent. Afterwards had a top-hole hot bath at the hotel—never know when one will get the next ! 'Groaner' and I motored back to camp ; called on the Greys on the way. Had a dish of tea with them. What a good lot they are ! Did stables and then went to dinner at Havre. Back and to bed very early, as we start early to-morrow. I am the last squadron to entrain, and have to leave camp at 9 A.M. First squadron leaves about 4 A.M.

Crowds round the camp all day—seems to be the fashionable amusement. No news of the war. Our ultimate destination is again a great secret. It is quite wonderful, the secrecy that is being kept. A very necessary precaution, as I am sure the place is swarming with spies, as in '70.

Much struck by the demeanour of the French. I had a long talk with a French officer. They seem very calm, but very

determined over the war; quite different from what one reads of their behaviour in '70. Am more than confirmed in my opinion that they (the French) are the better nation of the two, and that in the '70 war Germany had all the luck. I fancy the French will be another shock for William II.

August 19, Wednesday.—Up about 6.30 A.M. Breakfasted with the enterprising Frenchman. (Excision by Censor.) Paraded at 9.30 A.M. and marched to the station. A French Boy Scout guided us; he spoke excellent English, told me he was at Dover College. On arrival at station found the train waiting, and as V. had gone on ahead he had told off the train, so started entraining at once. French trucks are the same as in India; the horses stand lengthways, not across, as on our home railways. Don't like the method, as one can't pack the horses tight enough. Finished our entraining by about 1 P.M. and was informed that the train could not leave before 4 P.M.

Our Officer-Interpreter joined—seems a good fellow. I decided to go into the town for lunch. Take the Interpreter, whom we nicknamed 'Bossie,' and 'Ted' R., with me. Got hold of a 'W. & G.' taxi, which is doing transport work, and drove off. Good lunch. Back at the station by 3 P.M., and find 'Jim' B. has turned up on his own and wants me to take him on my train. Jolly sporting effort on his part, considering he left the army twenty-two years ago. The more the merrier, so he joins our party, and a cheery one it is. At 4 P.M. we start, again to an unknown destination. We arrive at Rouen, where the horses are watered and the men get coffee. Great enthusiasm at all the stations; flowers thrown in the carriages. Reach Amiens. At the first stop, about ten minutes after leaving Amiens, several horses are reported down. Wonder the lot aren't, as we have had about twenty awful jolts; awful job getting them up. Luckily found that brute No. 33 had broken its neck; threw it out. I'm thankful to see the last of that brute; it's been the curse of my life ever since I took over command of the squadron. We are four in an old-fashioned first-class, so V. and 'Firebrand' decided to sleep in the guard's van on their valises. 'Bossie' and I each slept on the seats. 'Bossie' not a good stable companion—he snores awfully. Must watch it in future!

Thursday, August 20.—Awake very early. At our first stop had coffee and a *petit verre*, excellent. At Maubeuge we saw a French airship cruising about. Still on. Arrive at Jeumont, where we detrain. B., of the 19th Hussars, is Railway Staff Officer. Last time I saw him was at the Cavalry School in '08. We are to

billet at Coulsolre, about seven miles N. of Jeumont, well into Belgium. We started for Coulsolre about 2 P.M. About five miles out on our way met the 18th Hussars manœuvring. I asked a sergeant what they were doing; he told me a practice rear guard. Arrived at Coulsolre about 4 P.M. and found my squadron had to billet at a place called Les Haies, so send V. on to settle the squadron in. I stayed to see the C.O. and get instructions. Had a shave and some wine and eggs with headquarters, while waiting. Got back to Les Haies; found the horses and men quite comfortable. Had a bath and dinner. 'Firebrand' out on outpost with his troop. Slept in a cottage with 'Jim' B. This billeting is strange to us. An excellent scheme; wish we did more of it in England. The inhabitants most enthusiastic; ready to do anything for us they can.

August 21, Friday.—*Réveille* at 3.30 A.M. Turned out. No bath this morning; it begins to feel like the real thing. Breakfast at 4 A.M. The old woman at the *auberge* made us coffee. Parade at 5 A.M. and moved off to join the regiment at Coulsolre. We, the regiment, joined up with the rest of the brigade and marched to Bray. Nothing happened; no news of the enemy. March quite undisturbed. Arrived at Bray about 6 P.M. and went into billets. My squadron got quite a decent inn. After seeing the horses and men settled down, had a bath and then dinner, and to bed about 10 P.M. The men having a great time, as every village we went through the inhabitants all turned out and handed up beer, cigars, &c. They, the inhabitants, are more than delighted to see us, as they are terrified of what would happen if the Germans came. Those I talked to seem to hold the Uhlans in particular dread. Hope to goodness we have a chance of getting at these Uhlans and seeing what they really are worth. Of course in '70 they were never really tackled by trained troops, so it's quite on the cards they are living on a false reputation. Men all desperately keen on getting to grips.

August 22, Saturday.—*Réveille* at 3 A.M. Our good hostess at the inn had hot coffee and *petit verre* ready. We added some 'bully' beef and bread, so had a good breakfast. It's a great thing to start the day with a good breakfast; one feels more contented and ready to take on anything. Stood to our horses until 6 A.M. This gave us time for an 'after breakfast' smoke and a good look round the horses and saddlery. About 6 A.M. we moved out and took up a 'position of readiness' on the higher ground about two miles N.W. of Bray. Squadron leaders went forward with the C.O. about three-quarters of a mile for observation, where we remained for some hours. There was an inn on the road, close by. The

owners insisted on supplying us with bread, butter, jam, cheese, wine and beer, and absolutely refused to take any payment. Patrols come in reporting German patrols in the vicinity. As the children say, 'we are getting warm.' Ah! This looks like business. Shells are seen bursting over the village of Peronne on our right front, held by the 2nd Cavalry Brigade. The shelling becomes heavy, and we can see the village is on fire. The 3rd Cavalry Brigade (ours) is moved back to some higher ground S.W. of Bray, in line with and on the left of the 2nd Cavalry Brigade, which has fallen back on Binche. Reports say the French are heavily engaged at Charleroi, away on our right. On arrival at our new position, from the high ground we can see through glasses the fight at Binche. The Greys are in the thick of it. Our regiment is in line of squadron columns with double interval, about 800 yards behind the high ground. We leaders are all on the high ground. Suddenly the Germans start to range on the regiment. The first shell bursts in front of my squadron; the second behind them. This means they have the 'bracket,' i.e. the range, first go off, and the next shell will go plumb into the middle of the squadron. Am helpless up here, 800 yards away. They are moving to the right! Thank goodness! V. had spotted the 'bracket.' There is the third shell, exactly on the spot where the squadron was a few seconds ago! In future, my friends, you must shoot quicker if you want to catch us; now you have got to relay! Relay they do, so the regiment is moved close up under the high ground, and is fairly safe. The guns are now turned on to the high ground. We see it getting hot. We are ordered to retire to the higher ground to our right rear, which means we have to cross a shell-swept area. We retire by troops and are well shelled, but no harm done. Men very steady and drill just as if they were accustomed to be shelled, whereas very few have ever been shot at before. Take up a new position, which we hold till about 6 P.M., not attacked. About 6 P.M. we retire and march to Elouges, W. of Mons, where we arrived at 3 A.M. on Sunday morning, going the whole time. Oh that march! Everyone dog-tired, and no food except what we carried on us. At one village 'Bossie,' my interpreter, got some bottles of wine, which we did enjoy. We marched S. of Mons, and for about ten miles over cobblestones, very slippery, through what seemed like one continuous town, but of course in reality several, though they all joined. To judge by the crowds lining the streets they must be mining and iron-foundry hands. The whole way was one incessant roar of 'Vive l'Angleterre!' 'Vive la France!' 'Vive la Belgique!' and

lastly, 'Vive l'Entente!' Oh! how tired and heartily sick one was of those cries! At last we reach Elouges and find two squadrons are crowded into a school-house, and 300 horses are to be picketed in the playground! and not a big one at that. Imagine it! Packing 300 horses into a yard that would not hold 100 in comfort. Every one beat to the world. I would shoot—no, torture—that billeting officer if he had been there. After a lot of trouble we get them all in, packed like sardines. We get in the schoolmistress's house, eat some 'bully,' and lie down on the floor and sleep, after twenty-four hours!!!

August 23, Sunday.—Up at 7 A.M. Thought I should have slept the clock round, but feel quite refreshed after about three hours' sleep. Had some food, and with difficulty pushed my way out through the mass of horses to see the C.O. to find out if we are going to stay here, and, if so, to know if we can find fresh billets. C.O. just back from the General, with the information that the regiment, in fact the brigade, will remain in billets the whole day, and that squadron leaders can interview the *Maire* and find fresh billets for themselves. 'McBun,' whose squadron was packed up with mine in the school playground, comes, and we both lay our woes and opinions of the billeting officer, and incidentally our wishes as to his future end, before the C.O., who, with his usual tact, calms us down, and we set out for the *Maire*, almost inclined to shake hands with the billeting officer! We form up at the *Mairie* with our Squadron Quartermaster Sergeants and Interpreters, and we are received in the 'Council Chamber' and invited to take seats round a large table. The fun then begins. Everyone talked and gestured at once. I could not go the pace; my French wasn't good enough. However, in the end, after a conference which looked as if it would end in a free fight, we got fresh billeting papers, and went off to inspect the new billets. Got excellent billets; two troops in one farm, and two troops in another. 'Jim' B., 'Bossie,' V., and myself told off to an excellent house owned by a charming lady. Moved squadron to new billets and got the horses dressed, watered, and fed. They wanted it after the long march of yesterday. Warn the men to wash, and get as much rest as they can. Got them beer; they seem happy and contented. We, the Squadron Headquarters, return to our house and find Madame has *déjeuner* ready. Top-hole omelette, &c., a real French meal. After *déjeuner* have a bath, put on clean underclothes. Just settled myself for a sleep, when I was sent for to Regimental Headquarters. Had tea with them. 'Burrage'

most amusing. Said though he 'could not speak the language' he had found the phrase that seemed to get him everything. 'Vive Long-Tom,' but he did not know what it meant!! On getting back to my billet I saw a German aeroplane coming over the town. Turned out a couple of troops and shot at it. Reports came in that it came down. I must say I thought it was hit. Anyhow I do know *one* thing that was hit, and that was the electric wire! There has been a big bombardment going on all the afternoon, and from a 'coal-tip' about a mile away the shells could be seen bursting in the direction of Mons. Our hostess is greatly perturbed. Assure her there is 'pas de danger.' An excellent dinner. Our kind hostess produced a bottle of champagne, and served dessert on a black Napoleonic transfer service which had belonged to her grandfather—a great honour. At 9 we decided to have a good night and turn into beds with sheets!!!

9.30 P.M. awaken! Orders to say that 'Echelon B' is to parade and move off at 10.15 P.M. D—n, this means dressing and packing our valises. See 'Echelon B' off, and then partially undress and turn in. 11.30 P.M.—'Orders, Sir.' Saddle up, dress again, and down to the squadron. Saddling up is not quite so easy as it sounds in the dark. Ordered to stand-to, to turn out in a quarter of an hour, to arrange for men to sleep by their horses. Poor d—ls, they want it after marching all last night. All this is too much for my hostess's nerves. She is terrified and has collected a crowd of friends. Do my best to soothe her. Try again to get some sleep; it is now about 1 A.M.

Monday, August 24.—At 2.30 A.M. I find myself shaken and the words 'Orders, Sir,' to say the regiment will turn out at 4 A.M. Get up and go down to the Sergeant-Major and warn him. Give up all idea of any rest, so join Madame and her friends in coffee, and in my most persuasive manner and best French suggest an omelette, &c., would be agreeable before we start. My suggestion is taken by Madame and several of her friends, who rush off to make it. I do hope it won't be a case of 'too many cooks spoiling the omelette.' Madame's male companion, who remains, muttered, 'Mon Capitaine, encore un petit verre.' Sound fellows, the Belgians. With the omelette 'Jim' B. and the Interpreter arrive, so we fortify the inner man against future contingencies! Time to get off, so will bid Madame farewell and thank her heartily for all her kindness and great hospitality. Assure her there is nothing to fear from the Germans, that she is perfectly safe.

We march out and join up with the Cavalry Division at

Audregnies. Heavy fighting going on on our right. Message comes about midday that the 5th Infantry Division are being hard pressed, and that we, the Cavalry Division, are to go to their help. In doing so we bump into the head of another German column of infantry, so have to take them on dismounted. My squadron is sent to support the 5th Dragoon Guards, who are heavily engaged. Leave my horses under cover of a sunken road running up a hill. Take up a position along the road on the top of the hill and join up with the 5th Dragoon Guards on my left. Great battle going on all round. Germans advancing in columns, great targets. My lads really do great execution. Can see the effect through my glasses, but still they come on. Getting hot, and several men wounded. Men seem really to be enjoying it, to judge by the conversations I hear around me as I move along the line. Ordered to retire and take up a new position in rear. Retire by troops extended to our horses; have a nasty open bit of ground to cross, and the firing is heavy. However, we get across all safely and get the wounded under cover. Sorry my signalling corporal is hit—a good fellow in every way—great loss to me. Go through the village of Augre to our next position; on arrival finding V. and two rear troops missing. Again ordered to retire to a fresh position to our right rear; on the way pick up the Colonel. A woman at a cottage is handing out beer; stop and dismount and have a glass—awfully thirsty. Hand the Colonel a glass, and go on up the hill. Just reach the top when a hot fire is opened. Colonel stayed at the bottom to bring up another squadron. He and 'Poolie' are hit, the Colonel badly, 'Poolie' slightly. Unfortunately the woman who gave us the beer was killed as she was handing out beer to the men. Ordered to retire on Bessigne, where the division is 'rendez-vousing.' Report casualties in my squadron to General A. V. and the troops (two) rejoined, which reduces my casualties to —. The whole Cavalry Division retires on Wargnies, where we bivouac for the night. My squadron for outpost. 'Jim' B. and the Interpreter go off to hunt for wine, food. Go round the outpost line with the G.O.C. Very extended. Post the squadron. Look up Regimental Headquarters. They give me some food—first since my omelette at Elouges, about 3 A.M. It is now nearly 9 P.M. Back to my squadron headquarters in a cornfield, where I find 'Bossie' has more food. Eat and bed down on some stooks—dog-tired. Horses not had even their girths loosened since 3 A.M.

August 25, Tuesday.—Awake at daybreak and send out patrols. No sign of the enemy. Where can their much-talked-about cavalry be? Surely after yesterday's retirement they ought to be worrying us. Can it be that their cavalry is a fraud? Our Cavalry Division moved towards Valenciennes and manœuvred round it. Wherever we appeared we were shelled. To me a meaningless day, as did not know what our objective was, or what we were doing, except having a very fatiguing time for men and horses. Came across B. S. and had a most interesting chat about his experiences when imprisoned for spying. A persistent rumour going round the Division that we are surrounded. About 4 P.M.—perhaps later—I forgot to take the time—General G. moved us off independently. Rumour—always a lying jade—again said that G. was determined to save his brigade. Anyhow, off we started, moving quickly across a thickly-wired country. This caused delay in cutting. Came to a deep-sunk road with a wire fence each side. Everyone got over all right except one of my men who rolled over and broke his shoulder. When we got across we saw a battery. Came into action against us, and they shelled us at close range. We had a long gallop in full view of the guns, and had to cross a railway by a level crossing. Marvellous we weren't all killed, but not a man was hit. We retired on Le Cateau, which lies in a hollow surrounded on all sides by high ground—a perfect shell-trap. We retired through Le Cateau. What a sight! A pitch-dark night, raining, the street blocked with guns, ambulance wagons, transport, infantry, cavalry, all going different ways. We managed with great difficulty to thread our way through and get clear of the town. I never saw such confusion. Lucky for us the German cavalry did not push on with their much-talked-of dash! We went on another four miles to Cotillon, where we billeted (the whole regiment in a farm) and got our girths loosened and saddles off for the first time since 3 A.M. on Monday, and it is now about 10 P.M. Found that 'McBun' and the whole of A squadron, 'Henry' and one troop of C squadron are missing. Probably got cut off in our retreat by 2nd Cavalry Brigade, which was near us. Hope they are all safe. Two troops, 3rd Hussars, joined on to us. Cavalry Division seems rather mixed up. Perhaps we were nearly surrounded. Feeling in regiment is that General G. has saved us from a disaster. Heavy artillery firing on our right. Looks as if they were working round us. Food and to sleep in a hayloft about 11 P.M. Grand stuff to sleep in. Disturbed by orderly with orders.

August 26, Wednesday.—Up and ready to move off at 4.30 A.M. Moved back to Le Cateau. Did not enter the actual town, but went round the high ground to the S. of it and took up a position on the W. of it. Great battle going on. Fifth Infantry Division having a bad time of it and retiring. We cover their retirement. My squadron on high ground overlooking a railway embankment about 2000 yards again. See German infantry advancing towards it in columns. G.O.C., on my reporting this, sends me a section of guns under 'John' G. Pointed out target to him, which he picks up and gets the range at once; smartest bit of R.H.A. work one could wish to see. For about ten minutes he gives the Germans absolute hell; every shot seems to have effect. I was carefully watching through my glasses; they must have lost at least a couple of hundred. I could see their dead and wounded lying all over the field. Anyhow, they stopped their advance in that direction, and our infantry opposing them were enabled to get away. Awfully impressed with the way this section of R.H.A. was handled by 'John' G. If ever I get detached with a section of guns shall always ask for him. The right type of Horse Artillery officer; quick in picking up his target and not afraid to handle his guns boldly and take risks when the occasion warrants it, as in this case. Our Infantry gradually retire through us. The Colonel of — Regiment thanked me for our support; poor fellows, his regiment had been badly mauled. Heard 'McBun' with his squadron had been seen in Le Cateau early this morning, so they are safe. We retire in a westerly direction and manœuvre on the flank of the 5th Infantry Division. Late in the afternoon we see in the distance a division of Uhlans. The General tells us he has decided to take them on, but we shall charge at the trot, as our horses are dead beat. We, the 3rd Cavalry Brigade, manœuvre and get the favourable ground, and the Uhlans, after having a look at us, refuse the fight we offer and disappear. Cowards! Fancy a division refusing to take on a brigade! Great disappointment among all ranks, as we are all longing for a cavalry fight. All this dismounted work against infantry in vastly superior numbers is most disheartening. We retire to —, where we arrive about 11 P.M., and halt to water and feed the horses. Get some food. Everyone awfully tired—raining hard. The orders come that we are to march at 1 A.M. Explain to men we are in rather a tight place, and that in spite of their fatigue everyone must buck up. Men lie down on the pavements and hold their horses. What a sight! Men and horses absolutely exhausted, but yet there is that spirit of cheerfulness which never

fails Tommy Atkins even under such conditions as these. It is apparent to everyone that we have taken the 'knock': with most armies one would say beaten, but with Tommy Atkins you can't say that, as it would not be true, as the only way to defeat him is to kill him; otherwise he just goes on suffering every hardship *without* a grumble, and then, when you think he is absolutely done, he turns round and hits you. People at home don't realise and understand what heroes the men are. Brave, suffering every hardship without a grumble, loyal, and in the highest sense true, typical Britons. And yet there are people who dare to object to a soldier in uniform being allowed in the more expensive parts of theatres, &c. Good God! it makes me mad: such people are not fit to black Tommy Atkins' boots.

August 27, Thursday.—Start at 1 A.M. Literally had to shake the men to wake them up. They seemed dazed with fatigue, but they made a great effort and pulled themselves together. It had stopped raining, but was pitch-dark. I shall never forget that ride. I have never known what agony the want of sleep can be. I thought I did when I had to go on outpost after the battle of Colenso, in the South African War, but that was child's play to this. I had a sort of optical illusions. I seemed to be riding into a grey brick wall the whole time; it was most curious. Once my trumpeter seized my arm, and I found I had fallen asleep and had ridden off the road. As day broke and it became lighter, one felt better. When it was light enough to see it was an extraordinary sight; everyone looked gaunt, haggard, not to say very dirty. We had not had a wash for over forty-eight hours; a lot of fighting and no sleep for the same time. About 4 A.M. we arrived N. of St. Quentin, where we halted and put out outposts; off-saddled in an oat-field, so that the horses could feed. Everyone made a bed of the stooks and slept. We moved to a village near Itancourt about 10 o'clock, where we rested the whole afternoon. Our guns were in action; nothing of importance. We moved into Itancourt about 5 P.M. to billets. Inspected the horses; their backs are in a bad state, but what can one expect, as they have hardly had the saddles off since last Sunday, and they have done about 70 miles since yesterday morning? However, it's WAR.

August 28, Friday.—Left Itancourt about 5.30 A.M., much refreshed by a good sleep. Marched through Essigny-le-Grand, taking up various positions. Our patrols reported patrols of Uhlans, but no formal bodies. Squadron sent to support 'C' squadron, as enemy reported to be in force at Essigny-le-Grand, but they made no attempt to attack us, except by a troop, which

we drove off. Covered retirement of the brigade over the canal at Jussy. On the way back we killed a patrol of two Uhlans. Awfully good kit these Uhlans of the Guard have. Bridge at Jussy blown up by our people after we have crossed. Billet at Frières. The whole regiment in a large farm; all the horses in barns. (Excision by Censor.) We all sleep in a hayloft, as they refused to let us sleep in the house; first case of inhospitality. On my way to bed I saw all the farm hands sitting down to a regular spread—wine, butter, milk, &c. (Excision by Censor.)

August 29, Saturday.—Up by 4 A.M. and had a forage round for breakfast; found butter, bread, and caught the men milking the cows, so I commandeered a bucketful. The old lady in charge much upset, though we paid for everything. Supplies came in, and with them our first mail. Letter from 'May'; a money-lender's circular, and a notice from Hummel, of Bond Street, asking me to continue my patronage! Squadron sent to hold railway bridge at Mennessis, and patrol to Remigny, Vendeuil, and Quessy. Soon after patrols sent out, get orders to retire at once on Chauny. Send to withdraw patrols. Remigny patrol comes in and reports patrols of Uhlans. Get further orders to retire at once. Fear Vendeuil and Quessy patrols will be cut off. Retire to Chauny, cross the river Oise to Autreville, where we take up a position. Off-saddle and feed. Retire to Pierremande, where we billet. Excellent dinner, wine, &c.; do ourselves right well. Go up to regimental headquarters; find they have also had a good meal. While we are chatting the Church of England chaplain comes in to try to arrange a service for to-morrow. (Excision by Censor.) Shortly afterwards the Roman Catholic chaplain came in on the same errand. (Excision by Censor.) Such a cheery fellow, full of fun and jokes. He stayed to have a smoke and chat. (Excision by Censor.)

August 30, Sunday.—*Réveille* at 2.30 A.M. Moved off at 4.30 A.M. and retired to Vezaponin, taking up various positions, but were not attacked. Uhlan patrols in touch with our patrols, but they do not worry us. We arrive at Vezaponin about 2 P.M. and get into very comfortable billets. 'C' take up an outpost position from Morsain round the N. of Vezaponin to Epagny. As I have to do night outposts I go round the line with H. Afterwards he and I have a good wash in a stream, and find the others doing the same and washing their clothes. I had no time to wash my clothes, as I have to parade at 5.30 P.M. to take up my outpost positions before dark. Call at regimental headquarters for final instructions, when we hear a lot of galloping; find it is the squadron

after a patrol. Recall the squadron and administer the necessary rebuke—overkeenness. Take up the night outposts, and arrange for my squadron headquarters to be at the barricade at the entrance to the village, which is defended by the machine-gun section. On my return from posting the pickets I leave V. in charge while I have dinner. Return to squadron headquarters. V. and I both sleep on doorsteps—very hard!

August 31, Monday.—Waken at daybreak; very stiff after the night on the doorstep. Find an inn and get the people to make some coffee for us all. No reports in from the pickets, so all must be clear. V. and I return to our billets about 5 A.M. Our reliefs go out. Hear we are not to leave till 3 P.M., so prepare for a comfortable day; shave and wash. Relief of my picket at Morsain is attacked on its way out. 'McDuf,' with two troops, sent out to help. Regiment ordered to retire to high ground N. of Nouvron, where we take up a position. 'McDuf' returns with sad news that J. killed and his picquet cut up. He himself had been driven out of Morsain by superior forces. Ordered to send troop, 'Ted' R.'s, to Tartiers. Germans reported moving S.W. Can see large bodies of them in the distance.

Regiment retires on Fontenoy, my squadron to cover retirement. Ordered to retire and send one troop to support 'Ted' R. at Tartiers; send 'Arthur' R. with orders for both to move on to Fontenoy. Join up with regiment at Fontenoy, and we cross the river Aisne at Le Pont. 'De B.,' with one troop, ordered to hold the bridge while the whole brigade retired to high ground S. of the river. 'Ted' and 'Arthur,' with their troops, not rejoined according to my orders; fear they must be cut off. Report says bridge has been rushed by Uhlans. Find out that 'Ted' and 'Arthur,' who had retired in accordance with my orders, had been ordered back again without my knowledge. A man of 3rd Hussars, who says he saw the bridge rushed, gave a graphic description, and described the place as a perfect shambles of men and horses. Awfully depressed about 'Ted' and 'Arthur.' They were both such excellent officers and good fellows. Whole brigade retires S. Regiment went to Mortefontaine, where we stayed the night; the men sleeping in the street, holding their horses, which remained saddled, as we expected to be attacked any moment, as we believed the bridge at Le Pont had been taken. Everyone dead beat—a very trying day.

To show how very inaccurate the description of even 'eye-witnesses' can be, and what harm they are apt to do in war, I

will relate the tale told by the private of 3rd Hussars who reported the rushing of the bridge at Le Pont. 'Fire was opened by the Germans, and the barricade on the bridge was just closed when two officers jumped it. These officers were followed by at least a hundred men, a great number of whom were shot down, but the remainder pulled down the barricade and crossed the bridge. The place was piled up with dead horses and men.' This was his tale, and caused us to spend a very anxious night. This is what really took place:—My two troops under 'Ted' and 'Arthur,' who had been ordered back to Tartiers, were driven out of that place and retired to Fontenoy, and, finding the brigade had retired and crossed the river at Le Pont, proceeded to do the same. Just as they reached Le Pont fire was opened on them, so they galloped for the bridge, across which the barricade had been drawn. 'Ted' R., who was leading, jumped the barricade with another man. 'Arthur,' who was leading the two troops, on reaching the bridge, 'slipped up' and about a dozen men and horses fell over him. The remainder got the barricade pulled aside and crossed the bridge, as did all the fallen men, in safety, though they were fired at all the time at close range. Not a man hit, but we lost several horses.

September 1, Tuesday.—Marched at 3.30 A.M. 'Ted' R. and 'Arthur' R. rejoined. Delighted to see them safe and sound. Brigade took up a position at Marival. My squadron sent to hold Taillefontaine with two troops and some high ground in the Forêt de Villers-Cotterets, about two miles S. I went to Taillefontaine and sent V. with the other two troops. We were lightly attacked at Taillefontaine. No harm done; one man slightly wounded. We could see the Germans moving on the other side of the valley in a S.W. direction. Relieved by 4th Hussars and retire on V. The remainder of the regiment joins up, and we all retire and take up a position S. of Emeville to cover the retirement of the brigade. Fourth Hussars heavily engaged in the Forêt. Colonel H. badly wounded. This leaves every regiment in the brigade with its Colonel wounded. Whole brigade retires *via* Vez to Vanciennes, where we enter the Forêt de Villers-Cotterets again. At the entrance to the Forêt we halt, as we can see in the distance a tremendous fight going on at Villers-Cotterets. The Irish Guards are covering themselves with glory. Our guns in action for a short time. Retire to Antilly, where we billet. Funny, the first root-field I went into this morning a covey of partridges got up at my horse's feet.

September 2, Wednesday.—*Réveille* at 2.30 A.M. Marched at
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4.15 A.M., acting as rearguard to the brigade; through the Bois Montrolles, took up a position by Bouillancy. Shelled out of it; lost four horses killed; retired, taking up various positions *via* Etrepilly, Barcy, Meaux, to Villenoy, where we billeted by the side of the canal. Grand place, and the men got a good wash. We, the officers, put up in a large house, where they gave us a really good dinner, properly served. Slept in a bed; really awfully comfortable. Hear the French are detraining large masses of troops at —. There are rumours that we are to go into a rest camp behind Paris, and we need it, not only to rest the horses and men—both are very tired and worn—but also to refit, both very necessary. We are suffering from the want of horse-shoes.

September 3, Thursday.—Réveille at 2 A.M. Marched at 4 A.M. north towards Penchard, acting as a covering force to the Division, to allow it to join with the 18th French Corps. Crossed the Marne at Germigny, where we halted to water—awfully pretty country. We then moved through the Bois de Meaux to St. Jean and on to Sammeron—most lovely country—the road lined with apple-trees, the men really getting their fill; hope there will be no ill effects. From Sammeron we turned south to the Château Montbise, where we billeted—a lovely old place. About sunset a German aeroplane came over our heads; the gunners opened fire on it. It really was a fine sight to see the flash of the bursting shells all round the 'Taube,' and then a long sheet of flame shot out from it and it came to the ground like a comet. All the men cheered like mad. Had dinner in a shooting-box near the château. We made an excellent stew of chicken, bully beef, and all sorts of vegetables, all boiled up together. 'Firebrand' and I slept in the château, an enormous house, quite a couple of hundred rooms. We slept in the nursery. The owner was at the war. Wonderful reception-rooms. Wonder if the Germans will destroy it.

September 4, Friday.—Réveille at 4 A.M. The two hours' extra sleep was most acceptable. Marched at 6 A.M. south-east through the Bois de Doué and halted at Le Favet, where we took up a position. A German aeroplane hovered over us for a long time, but could not locate us, as we were hidden in the wood. About 4.30 P.M. our guns came into action on two German batteries coming into action at Doué, a high, commanding hill. Then ensued a very hot artillery duel for about an hour and a half. We were awfully lucky not to get a lot of casualties. Regiment retired behind the infantry outposts. Heavily shelled retiring. We went into billets south of Coulommiers at St. Pierre. During the

night a Uhlan patrol tried to rush a picket of the Black Watch. One officer and five men of the patrol captured. Later a squadron of German cavalry attacked, but were repulsed by machine guns. Heard we were to join up with the French cavalry at Rebais. The Greys sent a patrol there to join up, and found Germans instead of French. Young B., of the Greys, killed. Where are the French?

September 5, Saturday.—Réveille at 3 A.M. Marched at 4.45 A.M. to St. Augustin. Then crossed the valley to Les Bordes—perfectly lovely country, rather like Devonshire—peaceful hamlets. Seems awful to think those brutes, the Germans, will devastate the country—suppose our turn will come soon. Retire from Les Bordes through the Bois de Malvoisine to Hautefeuille and then through Patarches to Vibert, where we billeted. 'Echelon B' (our baggage wagons) joined us for the first time since August 23. Most of our fellows got a change of underclothes and a bath. I, through my own laziness and greed, missed both! I was rather late getting into my billet and dinner was ready, so as I heard there was to be no hurry in the morning I put off my bath and clean clothes until the morning. Went to bed about 9.30 P.M., undressed and got into pyjamas, and settled myself for a real good night. At 11.30 P.M. got orders to go at once to see the General. Dressed and went off, and got orders to start at 4 A.M. as a contact squadron towards Hautefeuille. Hurrah!! The retreat is ended. We are to advance. What do baths, clean clothes, loss of sleep, matter now? Arrange for squadron to parade at 4 A.M. and get what rest I can.

September 6, Sunday.—Started out at 6 A.M. as contact squadron and moved to Lumigny, where I halted and sent out patrols through Bois de Crécy and Forêt de Malvoisine. Receive reports from these patrols that both places are held, and that they are held up and cannot advance. Patrol in Bois de Crécy reports that it is cut off, but is trying to work its way back. Send out a troop to support each of these patrols. Get orders to hold Lumigny, so prepare it for defence. Supporting troops return; they were held up. Twelfth Lancers at Pezarches send message saying they are heavily attacked and want support. Send troop to help. Infantry take over defence of village. My squadron recalled to join the regiment. Brigade advances through Marles and then to Pezarches, where we bump into the German rearguard. Shelled them heavily. A motor with seven Germans shooting with revolvers charged 'Billy's' troop out on patrol. Germans shot one of his horses, and he shot one German. Billeted at

Pezarches. Had dinner at an *auberge*—very little to be had, as the Germans had taken nearly everything.

September 7, Monday.—*Réveille* at 2.30 A.M., but did not move until 8.10 A.M. Might just as well have remained asleep until 6.30 A.M. We are not having so much sleep that we can afford to waste four hours. However, 'C'est la guerre,' and we are advancing! Moved off in a north-easterly direction through Mauperthuis, and halted $\frac{1}{2}$ mile N.E. of that place. At 9.30 A.M. heard very heavy firing on our right; evidently the French engaged. Enemy retiring hurriedly in front of us. What a time we would have if only our poor horses were fresh! Moved about 11.30 A.M., when enemy opened artillery fire on us—no damage done. We opened on them with our guns and drove them back. Billeted at Mazagram. Horses are getting awfully done. They look well enough, but are absolutely leg-weary and suffering from the want of shoes; all the spare ones carried have been used.

September 8, Tuesday.—*Réveille* at 3.30 A.M. Marched at 5.30 A.M. as advance guard to the Brigade; my squadron advance squadron. Through Les Marches on to Doué, where the squadron was held up by some Uhlans in the village. Cleared the village and advanced to Mauroy and on to Montgoins, where we halted. Send 'Firebrand's' troop to St. Cyr, where he was held up. 'Ted' R.'s troop sent to support him. They are both heavily engaged. Our guns brought into action on high ground behind Montgoins. Very heavy shell fire—our guns getting it hot. Regiment ordered to retire to Mauroy, which is carried out under very heavy shell fire. Extraordinarily lucky we had no one hit. Shell burst just behind me and my horse ran away. 'D' Battery, R.H.A., had a very hot time. G., the battery commander, wounded. 'John' G. and P., subalterns, both killed. (Excision by Censor.) Infantry came up and forced the position. We advanced north-west and billeted at Romeny. Poor G.'s death a great blow. He was such a good fellow all round; a fine sportsman and soldier. The best always seem to be taken. Billeted at a farm. The Germans are laying waste the country—every place they have been at is absolutely ransacked.

September 9, Wednesday.—*Réveille* 3 A.M. Marched at 5 A.M. to Perreuse Château, where the 16th Lancers had billeted; found they were not up. Orders came that we were to rest for the day. Off-saddled and let the horses graze in a clover-field. They need the rest, poor brutes. 'Arthur' R. and I went into a farmyard, where we had a bath and shave, much to the amusement of the

inhabitants, both male and female. Much refreshed. Afterwards had an excellent sleep. At 4.30 P.M. we moved west and crossed the river Morin at Jouarre. The river runs in a very deep valley; it would have been a nasty place if they had held it. After crossing the river we went N.E. to Grand Mt. Menard, where we billeted. Very late getting in. Had very good quarters in a cottage. The woman most awfully kind, and cooked us a real good dinner. A very big fight has been going on all day on our right. Rumour has it the French have had a great success at Montmirail and taken 15,000 prisoners, and that the Germans are retiring as fast as they can.

September 10, Thursday.—Réveille at 2.15 A.M. Marched at 4.15 A.M. through Saacry and crossed the river at Nanteuil-sur-Marne; then on through Bezu-le-Guery Ventelet to Issonges, where we saw the German columns retiring in great haste, followed by a convoy. Word was immediately sent back for the guns, but as the country was very difficult for them to cross they were slow in arriving and only got in three shells before the Germans were out of range. The 5th Cavalry Brigade, on our right, opened fire on the convoy and got excellent results. The regiment advanced on Brumetz, my squadron acting as advance guard. On the way found an infantry cyclist patrol which had been ambushed by Uhlans—passed several carts abandoned, dead horses. The château just before Brumetz had been gutted by fire; any quantity of freshly-killed sheep, calves, etc., lying about, showing how sudden and quick the retreat of the Germans was. The whole regiment, on arrival at Brumetz, takes up a position on the north side; patrol reports that an attack is coming from some woods to our left front. A patrol of 12th Lancers come in and say they have been attacked while escorting some prisoners. One officer and a sergeant wounded. My squadron sent on to take some high ground on the north of the village; fine open country, no sign of any German advance, but the country is littered with every sign of their retreat—dead and wounded, carts, wagons of every description, dead horses. The attack reported by patrol was evidently a column of prisoners being escorted back. In a sunken road saw eight German ammunition limbers all smashed up. They must have been retiring at the gallop and not seen the sunken road, and galloped into it. You never saw such a smash; horses, men, and wagons all piled up. Collect any wounded we can and leave them for our doctors to attend to. Advance along the road to Chezy-en-Orxois, where my leading patrol reports that there are

sixteen Germans in a farm at the entrance to the village. Go forward with a troop and enter the farmyard after having posted men all round to prevent escape. The Germans surrender at once. Search them and take all papers from them. Smash their rifles and destroy the ammunition. Find most of them have a small revolver in a hip pocket, which they resent being taken. One fellow was most insolent; unfortunately for him, I understand German. (Excision by Censor.) The effect was marvellous and produced grovelling submissiveness. Having lined up my prisoners, I went through their kits and in one found a dirty piece of bread which the owner begged hard for, so I gave it him and he fell on it as if he had not had food for a month. Watered the horses. The farmer asked me to go into the house for a glass of wine, and then apologised for having no food to offer us as the Germans had eaten it all, and there were the remains of a real feast! Looks as if my hungry prisoner was play-acting. Expect they are told to say they are hungry to give us the idea they are short of food. There was a fine 40-h.p. Renault car just outside, but they had put a hole in the petrol tank. Took a 2-seater 8-h.p. De Dion car with a lot of petrol; it ought to come in useful. On passing through the village saw three civilians who had been murdered by these devils of Germans for refusing to bake bread for them. Our Medical Officer also came across an old man who had been shot by the Germans. We continue our advance to Marizy St. Geneviève, where we billeted. We were in an *auberge* where the Germans had been two hours before our arrival. They had absolutely ransacked the place in a most wanton manner. The woman to whom the place belonged was most businesslike and at once started to prepare dinner for us, while we tidied the place up. Had to guard the north end of the village, so made barricades across the roads. Jolly good dinner. A really good day—top-hole fun. There is no doubt the Germans are flying as fast as they can. S.S.M. had to go sick; it is wonderful how he has stuck it; his leg has been awfully bad.

September 11, Friday.—Réveille at 4 A.M. Marched at 6 A.M. through Noroy in pursuit of the Germans. Signs all along the road that they had moved very fast and unexpectedly, as camp fires had been left unlit, and wagons abandoned. The inhabitants all say the Germans moved suddenly in the middle of the night. Raining very hard; everyone soaked through. We push on through Billy-sur-l'Oureq to Hartennes et Taux, and moved up the main Soissons road for about one and a half mile, when we halted for some time. 'Henry' with 'A' squadron rejoin us; they

had been wandering about since August 25. Heavy firing going on on our left. The French are engaged with the Germans retiring along the Paris-Soissons road N.E. The brigade moved on to the high ground E. of Charantigny to support the French; our guns fired a few shells as it was getting dark. We could see the fight going on in the plain below us. It was a fine sight; the accuracy and rapidity of the French artillery was marvellous. The Germans must have had a really bad time, as the French went for them like tigers! We went into billets at Charantigny, and on our way there several French shells came our way, but they fell short. The French were searching the valley for us to billet there. Bad billets—very crowded—soaked to the skin. Had some food and went to bed. Feel very seedy.

September 12, Saturday.—Réveille at 2.30 A.M. Marched at 4.30 A.M. to Raperie, S. of Villemontoire, where we were told we were not wanted till 6 A.M. Again done out of one-and-a-half hours' sleep. Regret this, as I am still feeling very seedy. Am afraid my old trouble, contracted in South Africa, is finding me out. My squadron as advance squadron to the regiment, which is advance guard to the brigade. We started at 7 A.M. and marched to Villeblain and Ambrief, and reached Ciry, where we found one railway bridge blown up and the gates at the level crossing locked. A patrol of mine from the direction of Condé came back, having been shot at. One man shot through the head. A large farmer here told me that a German motor convoy had passed through yesterday, and it took from 2.30 P.M. till 7.45 P.M. to pass. It must have been these motor wagons carrying their infantry. If so, it accounts for how quickly they got away during Thursday night. Got the level-crossing gates open, and we went on to Chassemy and through that village to the high ground E.N.E. of it, where we halted in an opening in the woods there. Near where we halted was a sort of cave with some cottages built in it. When we had been there some little time, half a company of French infantry appeared, much to our astonishment. They had been lost, and hiding from the Germans in the woods for over a fortnight. A troop of Uhlans reported to be in the village. Ordered to send V. with two troops to clear it, which he does, and the brigade moves up from Ciry. My squadron sent forward to take up a line of observation. A troop of Uhlans came up from my right rear from the direction of Brenelle. The maxims opened on them and they disappeared. About twenty minutes later a company of German infantry came up from the same direction. The maxims opened on them and

they scattered. I swung the squadron round across their front and opened fire on them. Our guns opened a rapid fire on them. In a few minutes they put up the white flag, but some of them still went on firing, so we did not accept it and went on blazing away. Eventually they stopped firing, and we sent forward a party to take them prisoners. About 130 were secured, and there were about 70 killed, including all the officers. There were some awful sights. The regiment was ordered to mount and charge, which we did, and galloped for about one mile, but did not see any objective. A fairly heavy fire was kept up on us from our left front, which was held, or supposed to be, by our own troops. I lost five men and six horses from it. We then went troops right wheel and back to where we started from. The infantry came up and we went back to Chassemy. The regiment went into billets by squadrons near Ciry. The prisoners were placed in the church, and I went down to interview them to see what I could get out of them. A miserable-looking lot they were too; many wounded. The curé was doing what he could. I put a sentry by the altar rails to prevent anyone going near it, as the Host was on the altar. (Excision by Censor.) Found out that they were the 13th Westphalian Regiment of Landwehr. They did not know where they were or what they had been doing. They had been marching ever since September 2. This was their first engagement, and they were thankful to be taken prisoners. They said 'Gott sei Dank!' Several of them told me that Paris was in the hands of the Germans. They would hardly believe me when I told them this was not so. Having got the name of their General and some other information, I went back to Chassemy Château and reported to the General, and then rode about two miles to my squadron's billet. It has been pouring all day, and I am soaked to the skin and jolly seedy. Found the squadron in a real grand billet—a large house. I get a change of dry things, which the owner has left, some food and to bed.

September 13, Sunday.—No orders, so stay in bed till 7 A.M., when I sent a note to Headquarters to know what we are doing, and get the reply that we shall probably stay in billets all day, so get up to breakfast about 8.30 A.M., and have a shave and bath. Among 'Monsieur's' clothes I have a pair of 'slacks' (trousers), so I don those, also a pair of his shoes which fit me. I cannot say the same for the slacks, as Monsieur is, from the shape of his trousers, short and fat (I'm tall and thin). After breakfast I have out the horses and inspect them. They are a sorry sight; only 57 left out of the 150 I started with, and of those 57 many have sore backs, and all

want shoeing. My farrier sergeant and shoeing-smith corporal, like the good fellows they are, spent the night making shoes at a forge in Chassemy, so I see they have a good breakfast and a bottle of wine apiece, and they get to work. Thank goodness, it is a fine day, so the men can get their things dried. Write some letters, which B. takes off to be censored. After some lunch I inspect the château. The Germans were here on Friday night. Need one say more? The wilful damage these 'cultured gentlemen' do is really awful. The whole place is ransacked. A linen press has been emptied and all its contents scattered about. Every room has been upset and the things littered about; in many cases even the paper has been stripped off the walls in places—pictures smashed. In Madame's room the safe has been forced, and I find several empty jewel-cases. 'Firebrand' and I have a walk round the gardens; quite beautiful, with the mill-stream flowing through them. There is heavy artillery firing going on all round, especially in the direction of Chassemy. An occasional shell drops near our billets, but I am convinced they are only chance shots, as it is impossible for them to see our billets. They, the shells, alarm the good lady who has been left in charge, but we have reassured her. About 7 P.M. an order comes in for an officer's patrol to report on the bridge at Missy, so 'Firebrand' goes off, and we promise to have a bath and dinner kept hot for him. There is quite a good dinner arranged by the good woman in charge, but I am feeling so seedy it is not much good to me. 'Firebrand' returns; he says the G.O.C. told him we should not move to-morrow. I turn in early to get a good night, and if possible to sleep off this seediness.

September 14, Monday.—Get very little sleep, as I really am very seedy. At 4 A.M. an orderly brings orders that the squadron is to be at Ciry at 4.45 A.M. Dress, feeling like nothing on earth. It is raining 'cats and dogs.' Get the squadron out as quickly as possible and go to Ciry, to find the regiment has gone on to Chassemy, where we rejoin it. O'B. B., our doctor, says I had better have a day or two's rest and puts me into an ambulance, which moves into Chassemy Wood; not that I care much where it goes or what it does. Very muzzy in my head. 'McDuf' joins me in the ambulance; he is seedy too. Very heavy shelling going on all round, and a great number of wounded coming in. The old Greys are getting it hot. There is a lot of movement of troops in the wood, and the Germans start searching the rides with shell fire. Suddenly there are two awful explosions. They are two 'Black Marias,' one at the head of the ambulance convoy, and one at the rear;

luckily only two men killed. The Dr. in charge is a topper. He turned the ambulances round and away we went. Oh! that ride through the woods; we seemed as if we must upset any moment. I know it was perfect hell, though I can't remember details. I was only half-conscious. Just as it was getting dark we halted at some place, where 'McDuf' and I got out and lay on some heaps of straw, as a rest. We found these heaps of straw were dead Germans covered over. The Roman Catholic Padre buried them—such a good fellow. He came and talked to us and did what he could. The Padre was talking about the shelling we had had, and said: 'Shure, it was awful. I said me prayers to all the Saints, as I thought I might perchance save me sowl, but I never thought I'd save me skin.' The wounded had had an awful time during our ride from Chassemy. Later we went on to Braisne, where we were put into a house full of sick and wounded. There were five of us in quite a small room. As 'McDuf' and I had our German blankets with us, we just lay on the floor.

September 15, Tuesday.—The Orderly woke us about 7 A.M. and told us to get up at once, as a hospital train was waiting. Went down to the train in an ambulance and the train was quickly loaded up, 360 cases altogether. We were four in our carriage: 'McDuf' sick; G., R.I. Rifles, wounded in the leg; G., Lincolns, shot through the arm, the nerve cut. We started south and crawled along till we reached the outskirts of Paris about 11 P.M. The staff were most awfully kind, but awfully overworked, and there was no food on the train—not that I wanted any. At night G. and G. slept on the seats, I on the floor, and 'McDuf' on the floor in the corridor. No one seems to know our destination. Am not feeling much better; realise my South African complaint has me firmly in its grasp.

September 16, Wednesday.—Woke about 7 A.M. to find that we had remained the whole night on the outskirts of Paris. Felt very stiff and very seedy. About 7.30 A.M. the Orderly brought us a cup of tea, which was more than welcome. We started to crawl onwards on our way south. At a station before we got to Versailles, a kind Frenchman handed us in a jug of milk and a loaf of bread, both of which we hailed with delight. 'McDuf' and I made bread and milk of it, which we enjoyed, as, personally, it was the first meal I had had since Sunday night. At Versailles a most charming French lady came and talked to us. She told me her husband commanded a regiment of Chasseurs, and wanted to know if we had come across them. I shall never forget the look of suspense and strain in her eyes, whilst outwardly her manner would have led a

casual observer to suppose her chief anxiety was for our comfort. I so much regret I did not ask who she was, as she evidently, from her appearance, belonged to the 'Ancienne Noblesse.'

The train meandered on during the day, and we hear we are to go as far as Le Mans, which we reach about 8.30 P.M., where we hear we are to go on in an hour's time to Angers. We got out and had an omelette at a restaurant. (Excision by Censor.) We start again about 10, and are told the journey to Angers takes about six hours, so we bed down in the same order as last night.

September 17, Thursday.—We arrive at Angers about 4 A.M., and are turned out into motor ambulances and driven to No. 5 General Hospital, which is established in a Roman Catholic seminary which is not yet finished. The first man I saw on arrival was A., of the R.A.M.C., whom I had not seen since I was A.D.C. in Jamaica in 1904. We were immediately taken charge of by the Sisters and told off to our wards. ('McDuf' and I had one to ourselves.) Given a suit of pyjamas, a cup of bovril, and put to bed. I don't think I shall ever forget the absolute luxury and comfort of 'turning in.' Did not sleep much, as one always seemed to be expecting 'something to happen.' The strain seems to be telling on one. About 8 A.M. the Sisters brought us a cup of tea, and we had a wash, and were examined and inspected by the doctors. Fancy! this hospital was only moved into this half-finished building two days ago, and now 360 sick and wounded are put in at 4 A.M. in the morning and everything is working like clock-work. I think this is a regular feather in the cap of our R.A.M.C. They hope to have the water and electric light laid on all through the building to-morrow. The place is crammed full; beds being put all along the corridors.

September 18-26, Friday to Saturday week.—One day is very like another in hospital, and gives one no details for one's diary, but after the stress of the last few weeks it gives one time and opportunity to think over what has happened, the surprises and disappointments, and how different the great European War has, so far, been from what one was taught to believe it would be.

I suppose nearly all of us thought that such a war would open with a fight between the opposing cavalries, and we cavalry men pictured ourselves charging masses of German cavalry, and at the outset of the war fighting cavalry, and only cavalry. What a difference in reality! The much-talked-of German cavalry has absolutely refused to give us battle, but when we have come across it in formed bodies it has always, so far, retired behind the cover of the Jäger battalions, which are always close up behind it in motor

transport. Can it be that the German cavalry is all show and only 'charges' at manœuvres, when lances are not brought to the 'Engage,' and in war can only terrorise peaceful women and children, plunder villages, and when there is any danger of them getting their skins hurt, retire behind their infantry !!!

The thing that fills one with admiration for the German army is the thoroughness of all their organisation and preparedness for war. There is no doubt they, as a nation, have treated the art of war as a great science and studied it as such, and one can only thank Providence that their material is not as good as their organisation.

I think that even these few weeks of war have conclusively proved that it is the training of the men that really counts, and that it is the long service that has enabled us, a tiny force, to hold the German hordes in check during the retreat from Mons. In the matter of shooting there is no comparison between the Germans and our men. The German marksmanship is vile; in fact, it is so bad that our men are absolutely contemptuous of it, and I'm afraid this contempt may lead to a great loss of life for us, as the men seem to think a German can't possibly hit them at 200 yards. To cast doubts on the bravery of the German privates is, in my opinion, wrong. They must be brave to come on in the attack, as they do in columns, to meet certain death. At first thought one wonders why they don't adopt our open formation, but second thoughts tell one the reason is that the German private cannot be trusted away from the immediate control of his officer. His discipline, unlike ours, is one of fear, and not affection, as with our men. He is a soldier by force, whether he likes it or not; while our men are soldiers from choice, and their profession is their pride. To sum up, in my opinion, the great weak point of that really wonderful machine, the German army, is 'conscription,' as it ruins the men. In a conscript army the majority of the men dread the time when they will be called upon to serve, and hate it the whole time they are serving, with the result that they only do what they are absolutely driven to do by the necessarily severe discipline. The longest period of service with the colours is three years, and how much can an unwilling man be trained in that time? The one thing he is thoroughly trained in is a hatred of his officers and N.C.O.s, with the result that in war he does not trust them, and they don't trust him. A proof, I think, of the weakness of the German army is the readiness with which they surrender, once they get separated from their next higher command,

thus proving to my mind a lack of self-confidence caused by the iron discipline crushing out all power of initiative. One would like to know what the 'interior economy' of their army is like; I expect, like the rest of the German army organisation, it is excellent. Anyhow, their supply arrangements cannot possibly excel ours. When the history of the war is written, I do hope our Army Service Corps will get the honour and praise they so thoroughly deserve. It has been perfectly wonderful how they have kept us supplied during the retreat, not only with the necessaries of life, but with luxuries, such as bacon, jam, tobacco, and everything of really good quality, and they never failed us. There is no doubt motors are a blessing to the fighting man. Certainly in the old days of horse transport we could never have been fed as we have been during the retreat. Napoleon said 'An army marches on its stomach,' and I am convinced that the good and regular supply of food by the Army Service Corps contributed tremendously to our successful strategical retreat from Mons. As I overheard one of my men say: 'The bloke wot supplied this bacon ought to be made a bloomin' Dook.'

Another corps that has, in my opinion, earned the thanks and respect of the army is the Royal Army Medical Corps. Their organisation for the handling of the wounded is wonderful. The individual bravery on the actual battlefield of officers and men is too well known to need any comment, but the thing that has struck me more than anything is the kindness and thoughtful consideration of officers, sisters, and orderlies—nothing is too much trouble for them. They one and all are models of unselfishness. They seem as if they could not do enough to ease any suffering, and anyone who has had, I was going to say 'the pleasure,' and really it is almost a pleasure, to have been under them, owes the R.A.M.C. a deep debt of gratitude.

A thought that keeps coming to me is: 'Do the people in England realise what war means?' I'm afraid they don't, and from what I have seen of the awful destruction wrought in Belgium and the North of France I sincerely trust they never will. But, on the other hand, if the awful realities are not brought home to them, there is the danger that they will be apt to resent the loss to their pockets, and a 'peace party' will gain a hearing and a following before we have avenged the vile treatment of Belgium by these 'Schweinhunde.' I am sure if the people in England could only see for themselves the wanton and unnecessary destruction, the inhuman atrocities which have been committed, they would be

more than content to literally lose their last penny rather than have any talk of peace before Germany has been utterly and finally crushed out of existence as a nation. We have got to always remember that the destruction and atrocities done in Northern France and Belgium are as mere child's play to what Germany will do to England, if ever she gets the chance, so great is her mad anger against our country for having upset her carefully-arranged time-table of this war! I cannot help thinking the finest advice ever given to the nation, and which is most particularly apt at the present time, is that given by the King in his famous speech at the Guildhall: 'Wake up, England!' We, as individuals, are so liable to do nothing and just expect someone else to pull us through—muddle along anyhow; but in war every single individual has got to do his share personally. This is going to be a war of nations, not merely a war between the armies of nations. Of course, out here we get practically no news of what is going on in England, but lying here in hospital one does so long to be able to impress on the people that to enable us to be victorious it must be a case of individual *personal* service on the part of all, and not for the well-to-do to merely put their hands in their pockets for someone else to do the actual work. If Germany can sacrifice her men in a cause of mere self-aggrandisement, surely we of the great British Empire can give ours in the great and noble cause of avenging the wrongs done to the weak. Surely this is the true spirit of Democracy—the protection of the weak.

September 26, Saturday.—Up and dressed by 8 o'clock. We leave the hospital in motor ambulances at 10.30 for the station and get into the train for Nantes, where we arrive about 4 P.M., and go in motor ambulances to the Officers' Hospital, where I have a chat with Prince A. of B. who has been invalided down too. Find I am not to stay at the Officers' Hospital, but am sent to No. 2 General, where I am put into a tent with two badly wounded fellows and two German officers also badly wounded. One of them has been shot through the spine and is slowly dying from paralysis. Had an awful night, as his groans kept me awake.

September 27, Sunday.—Feeling very seedy after a bad night. Suppose I am very uncharitable, but I do resent being in a tent with two Germans. Am being kept in bed. I play patience most of the morning—generally bored. About 3.30 a doctor and a staff officer came in, and I overheard the following; I was half-asleep: 'Then that will be one lying and one sitting-up case. Start them at 5 o'clock.' When they had gone it struck me perhaps

I was to be moved again, which cheered me up, as I should then get away from my Germans! I asked the Sister if I was going to another hospital, and she said: 'Yes, you are being sent home; at 5 o'clock you are going down the river to St. Nazaire to join the hospital ship.' This was really a shock, as I had no idea there was any chance of my being sent home, as the doctors at Angers had told me I should get back again to the front in a day or two, and now I find I have been labelled for home the whole time. Just as we left the hospital tent the German died—poor fellow. G. and I joined the boat *St. Andrew*, which is to take us down the river. She is one of the G.W. Railway boats running in normal times on the Rossclore and Fishguard route. What comfort! The medical officers and Sisters on her are toppers, and again everything is done for our comfort. We start down the river, and I tuck up in bed.

September 28, Monday.—Awake to find we are anchored at the entrance to the docks at St. Nazaire. We work our way through the lock and up the docks (excision by Censor) and arrive alongside the hospital ship, the *Asturias*, the latest Royal Mail liner—a magnificent ship. We are tied up alongside her about 1.30 P.M. and hear she is not sailing to-day. (Excision by Censor.) The work of getting our wounded on board is started at once, and by about 4.30 all that she has room for are on board. I have a grand state-room all to myself. The boat is absolutely crowded: over 1,400 sick and wounded on board. I find a lot of men I know, and we have some good talks over various incidents that have happened.

I only have the clothes I stand up in, and want a pair of slacks, which K. H., of the Irish Guards, who has come on board to pay a visit, very kindly promises to get me by to-morrow morning.

September 29, Tuesday.—Awake about 7.30, and I think for the first time the pleasure of 'going home' touches me; my feeling up to now has been rather one of resentment. Have breakfast in my cabin, and get up about 9.30 to find we are 'casting off.' My slacks are too late! We crawl down the docks into the lock, and while we are in it K. H. arrives, and my slacks are hoisted on board. What a joy to be able to get out of boots and breeches! At last we are out of the lock and fairly on our way. The weather is absolutely perfect, and the sea like a mill-pond. I make a tour of the ship to see if I can find any of my men on board, but there are none. The hospital arrangements are, I should say, perfect. The time is passed talking with various men and relating our individual experiences. The general opinion seems

to be that the war will be a long one, and that we must have men, and heaps of them.

September 30, Wednesday.—The great excitement to-day is to get the first sight of Old England, which we do about 11.30 A.M. and steam up the coast round the S. of the Isle of Wight. (Excision by Censor.) We 'hove to' (a nice nautical expression that) in Sandown Bay to pick up the pilot. (Excision by Censor.) Having taken our pilot on board, we make our way round the Solent and up Southampton Water through a fleet of transports, and anchor off Netley. We are not to land to-night. Everyone is speculating on where we will be sent. The M.O. comes round and tells us off: so many for London, Torquay, and Osborne. I'm for the third place; rather disappointed that London is not my fate. Having learnt my destination, as Mr. Pepys would say: 'And so to bed.'

October 1, Thursday.—Up early, as the boat was alongside the quay by 9 A.M., when the work of disembarking the wounded at once commenced. Got a note from 'May' to say she was in Southampton with Dudley, and was not allowed in the docks, but that she had permission to come to Osborne and would join me there. Sent a letter to her by a Boy Scout. At 10.30 A.M. we went on board Colonel Benson's steam yacht to be taken across to Cowes, where we were met by Colonel Wardrop, the House Governor, and several motors, and taken up to Osborne House. The matron, who was King Edward's nurse, met us at the door, and we were told off to our various rooms. What comfort! What daintiness! and at the same time the recollection of what has gone on in this place, the favourite home of our late Queen, impresses one tremendously. To sit in the smoking-room, formerly the Council Chamber, overlooking the Solent, and think, is enough to cure the sickest man. Certainly the gift of this magnificent place to the nation for its sick and wounded officers of both services was not the least of King Edward's kind and thoughtful acts. The peace and quiet are delightful; for the moment one forgets that there is such a thing as war and its horrors, and then one remembers that under this roof the Arch-Hun stayed, and, with his lying treachery, pretended friendship for this country—back at once is the longing to be up and doing.

We are sent to bed early, and thus ends my diary of the war for the present, but I hope in a few weeks to recommence it.

HERBERT MADDICK,

5 (Royal Irish) Lancers.

PRESS BUREAU: Passed as Censored.

TWO SINNERS.¹

BY MRS. DAVID G. RITCHIE.

CHAPTER XXV.

LADY DOROTHY had never in the past allowed Stella to smoke in her house: that is to say, Stella had smoked in her bedroom. Now that Stella crossed the old-fashioned threshold of No. 2 Brown Street as an independent married woman, she boldly marched into the library behind the dining-room to join her husband after dinner. There she smoked a cigarette hastily, and, leaving her husband to follow her later on, joined the gayer company of the two ladies in the drawing-room.

On this Sunday evening she came up even sooner than usual, and by the most favourable chance she found Lady Dorothy alone, Maud having gone into the writing-room to search for a letter that her aunt had mislaid.

Stella went to the fire and seated herself on the fender stool. Then she plunged at once *in medias res*, prefacing her story about Major Kames with a brief 'Of course, you know, Aunt Dorothy?'

Lady Dorothy didn't know; how could she know? She hadn't heard a word, nor had she seen any notices in the paper, although she always read the paper through, excepting only the Parliamentary, the Foreign, the Learned, the Literary, the Legal, and the Financial news.

Any emotion that she might have felt at having been kept in complete ignorance was swallowed up in the emotion she felt in the news itself. To hear anything of any kind about the long-lost Major Kames was exciting enough, and to hear that he had been injured and had recovered and was actually about to enter the world of public affairs was absorbingly entertaining and touching. But when Stella spoke of his visits to Ursula in her illness, that took Lady Dorothy's breath away.

What was it that had always attracted him to poor Ursula? Heaven only knew. It was a mystery, one of those mysteries that would always remain a mystery. Lady Dorothy had confident expectations that at the Day of Judgment what she called 'practical

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mysteries' would be cleared up. She had a vague impression that the Recording Angel, sitting on nothing, of course, because, in addition to the mental pictures suggested by her hymn-book, Lady Dorothy also held unconsciously a humble form of the 'higher criticism'; the Recording Angel, sitting (as already described), would turn over the pages of his book and read aloud to those disembodied spirits (in forms composed of some non-material material resembling chiffon) who were interested, the secrets of all the Ages. But the mysteries of the heart, such as why Major Kames admired Ursula, belonging as they did to a region outside of 'actual facts,' would never be disclosed.

'And to think,' exclaimed Lady Dorothy, 'that that attractive man was within an inch of being killed!'

Major Kames lying between life and death! What if he had died? She could almost picture him 'Beyond the Rubicon,' singing (without a piano accompaniment). Fortunately that painful mental picture was unnecessary; he was alive and well.

Stella gazed up at her aunt's flushed face, at the eyes sparkling behind her eye-glasses. Stella was much flattered at the excitement her news had caused.

'I thought you ought to be told,' she said, in a solemn voice.

'Of course,' said Lady Dorothy, 'of course. I wish I had known before. To think that he was lying so ill, and no one from this house sent to inquire.'

'I felt sure you ought to know,' said Stella again very impressively.

'Of course I ought to have known,' said the old lady. 'I shall write to him immediately, before I go to bed.'

'I couldn't be sure, of course,' went on Stella, 'that Maud hadn't told you, but I thought I ought to find out. George didn't want me to; he wanted me to leave it all to Maud and to say nothing; but it appears, as I rather suspected, that Maud said nothing to you about it.'

'Fancy her not telling me!' cried Lady Dorothy. 'It really was too silly; there are limits to that sort of propriety. I suppose it was a case of *amour-propre*.'

'I am glad I was right in telling you,' said Stella, as she stroked Noonoo's placid head. 'I am glad I was right—very glad!'

'Quite right!' said Lady Dorothy. 'He's been in a serious accident, and must be sympathised with, and he must also be thanked for having looked after Ursula. I can't ask him to come

and see us, of course. Dear me! What a pity the whole thing is! If Maud remains an old maid, which 'pon my word seems likely, she'll only have herself to blame.'

Stella was going to say once more 'I am glad I was right!' for she felt that her devotion to the cause of duty had not been sufficiently acknowledged, when there came a sound of someone at the door, and she said instead, very hastily, 'Don't say anything just now to Maud, please, Aunt Dorothy; it would be so awkward for me. Maud wouldn't understand.' But the lady addressed had already turned herself in her chair at the sound of Maud's entrance, and she called to her niece in a voice that prophesied an approaching storm.

Maud came in and walked up to her aunt's chair. There she stood looking down at her aunt's animated face. She guessed what was coming.

'My dear child,' said Lady Dorothy, 'you have left me to find out by accident that Major Kames showed extraordinary kindness to poor Ursula at the last, when we couldn't be with her—in fact, when we didn't know she was ill. Also that he has himself been nearly at death's door. Now I call that heartless of you, or else,' she added, relenting at Maud's white face, 'or else very silly, too silly for a woman of your age, who ought to know something about social obligations by this time. We ought, of course, to have thanked Major Kames. Thanked him,' she repeated, nodding her head emphatically.

Maud stood silent. Stella, very much embarrassed, stroked Noonoo so roughly that the little animal rose up from her lap and tried to dodge away from under the imprisoning hands.

Lady Dorothy's vexation was already rapidly fading away before Maud's humility.

'We have always avoided talking about Major Kames on your account, but it is going too far, my dear, to suppose that a man's name must never be mentioned, even if he is dying, simply because you don't want to marry him. That's turning sense into nonsense.'

To make the situation more trying for Maud, the door opened and Broughton came in. He perceived instantly that he was involved in a domestic scene, and stood for a second thinking whether he could, without blame, go back to the library and smoke another pipe. But it was too late.

'George!' called out Lady Dorothy, 'All this time I have

never known that Major Kames looked after poor Ursula, when we didn't know, you know, how ill she was. Just think, he has never been thanked! It is more than annoying, it is scandalous!

'Yes indeed,' said Broughton in a conciliatory voice, 'of course he ought to be thanked. You ought to write and thank him, Aunt Dorothy.' And he moved away towards the piano, and began looking over some old music that belonged to nobody in particular, pieces that had been left behind by their owners for many, many years, and conscientiously collected together into a dismal heap by Jackson.

At last Maud's lips moved.

'I am sorry, Aunt Dorothy. I didn't realise the whole situation,' she said.

'I should think you didn't,' said Lady Dorothy. 'Fortunately he is quite well again. He might have died. Fortunately he is quite well again.'

'Major Kames is not quite well again,' Maud spoke slowly and stiffly; 'his right leg was injured, and it is feared that he may always have to walk with the aid of a stick.'

'How do you know that, my dear?' demanded Lady Dorothy. 'Stella, you never mentioned that!'

'A mutual friend, Father Fitzherbert, wrote yesterday, telling me,' said Maud.

Lady Dorothy stared at her niece, and then exclaimed, 'Dear me!' Then she sank back in her chair, and Noonoo, who had succeeded in releasing himself from Stella, came round to his mistress's chair and jumped upon her lap.

'My poor pet!' murmured Lady Dorothy, her thoughts still in a whirl of excitement at the news about Major Kames.

'Walk with a stick—how sad!' she said remorsefully. 'A man of that build, already inclined to err on the stout side, is bound to grow very stout if he can't take a great deal of exercise; and there's one thing a man ought never to get, nor a woman either, and that is stout!'

The pallor of Maud's face was suffused now by a warm tint which spread even to the roots of her hair.

'Surely Major Kames can get as stout as he likes, Aunt Dorothy,' she said. 'You talk of him as if he were not a human being! I don't understand your callousness. It wouldn't make the slightest difference to me if he became very stout.'

Having said these words, Maud glanced round the room with

startled eyes, as if she had heard them pronounced by someone who had just come in.

'My dear Maud!' exclaimed Lady Dorothy. 'Fancy Maud talking about other people being callous!'

Stella stared up from the floor with open astonishment at her sister. Broughton coughed over the music.

'I don't suppose he cares now whether it would make a difference. I didn't mean that,' said Maud, and she moved towards the door.

There was a brief, strained silence in the room. Then Broughton threw down the sheets of music which he was pretending to read upon the piano and strode towards the door too.

'Excuse me, Aunt Dorothy,' said Maud, rather faintly. 'I hope I haven't been rude, but I am not feeling very well and I'm frightfully stupid. Good night!'

She passed Broughton with a pitiful attempt to smile, and then with bowed head and drooping shoulders she sped upstairs.

A year and a half ago she had hurried up those same stairs, her heart and brain throbbing, but how different were the circumstances now! Indeed, she seemed to herself a different person.

When he had closed the door behind her Broughton went up to the two women and stood looking down on Lady Dorothy.

'Gracious goodness!' she exclaimed. 'How extraordinary Maud is!'

'I can't congratulate you, dear Aunt Dorothy, on your choice of a subject for after-dinner speaking,' he said in the same tone in which he had always expostulated with her about Kiddie. Lady Dorothy would not have endured that tone from anybody but her nephew.

'Maud has gone too far with this nonsense about never mentioning Major Kames' name again. Anybody would think he was dead and buried,' she said with some flash of returning indignation.

'I thought I ought to tell you, Aunt Dorothy,' began Stella again. 'I was sure it was the right thing to do.' She nodded her head two or three times at the space between herself and Lady Dorothy; the nods were meant for her husband. She felt that she had spoken when the time was ripe, perhaps overripe. As to George, he showed a curious obstinacy at times, and was capable of being really unreasonable.

During the rest of that evening Lady Dorothy could speak of nothing else but Major Kames and Ursula, of Major Kames

accident, and of Major Kames' injured leg, and particularly of the cruel loss of distinction that Major Kames' figure would probably suffer through lack of sufficient exercise. She refrained, however, from referring again directly to Maud; she was a little afraid of her nephew's reproof; but her thoughts kept on flitting back and back again to Maud's astonishing announcement that it would make no difference to her if Major Kames became very stout.

No woman in her senses could go on admiring a man as much if he were getting very stout; it wasn't in human nature to do so; and Maud had not admired him when he was, comparatively speaking, thin.

Had she, when it was too late, when only memories of him were left to her, fallen in love with Major Kames?

The old lady longed to find out what Maud really meant, if indeed, Maud knew what she meant herself.

'I had hoped that Maud would come down again,' she said as she rose, with obvious alacrity, at Stella's first movement to say good-bye.

'I expect she's gone to bed,' said Stella; 'she said she wasn't feeling well.'

'Yes, to be sure, she said she was not well,' said Lady Dorothy, and she tried to look unconscious of her nephew's glance. Was Maud really in love with Major Kames? Or was she, perhaps, merely a little sorry for him now he was hurt?

'I must take up some phenacetin to her,' she said decidedly. 'Well, then, Stella, I shall write to Major Kames at once and say how grateful we all are for his past kindness to poor Ursula, when Maud and I were away, trying to recruit.'

Lady Dorothy uttered the last words with a touch of pathos, suddenly remembering all the sad, sad tragedy of Kiddie, and how Piccanonoo (whom she held in her arms at that moment) could never, never take his place; though it was indeed through no fault of his own, poor mite; he could not help being born contented and gentle, it was not his little fault.

'Yes, please, say all that is proper in the nicest words,' said Stella.

'Of course I can't ask him to the house,' said Lady Dorothy; 'that would be quite impossible, and I suppose he will often be in town now, when Parliament is sitting,' and she sighed deeply.

'You can't ask him, of course, unless—' and here Stella's blue eyes shone like two polished turquoises, and her dimples seemed actually to twinkle in her cheeks.

'Unless what?' demanded her aunt eagerly.

'Oh, I don't know,' said Stella, going to the door; 'George will be cross if I say anything about it. But at least, Aunt Dorothy,' she added, turning round at the door and waving her good-bye, 'I am glad I spoke; I thought it my duty to tell you. I am so glad I was right.'

As soon as Lady Dorothy had heard the front door close, she put Noonoo into his basket at the side of the fire, and besought him to remain there patiently for a few minutes while she went up to see 'poor Auntie Maudie.'

Then the old lady went upstairs with great dignity, making little coughs as she ascended. She went into her own bedroom for a moment and looked for her bottle of phenacetin. Having found it, she went up another flight to Maud's room. What a climb it was! She waited to get her breath back; then she knocked gently at her niece's door.

At first there came no reply, but in answer to a second knock Maud's voice demanded: 'Who is it?'

'Aunt Dorothy,' said the old lady rather meekly. One of the most embarrassing things in the world is to answer quite simply the question: 'Who are you?'

Maud's voice answered, 'Come in!'

Lady Dorothy opened the door and went in. Maud was lying in bed propped up by pillows, reading by the light at the head of her bed.

'How is the headache?' asked her aunt, with an attempt at cheerfulness.

Maud's pale brown hair, falling about her shoulders in two long massive plaits, gave her almost the air of a sad, naughty child. Her brown eyes looked heavy; her lips were a trifle swollen.

'I have no headache, Aunt Dorothy,' she said.

'Oh!' said Lady Dorothy, 'then you don't want any of my phenacetin.'

'No, thanks,' said Maud; 'I don't need any.'

'You mustn't mind your old aunt scolding you,' said Lady Dorothy blandly. 'You must remember, Maud, that it was a great shock to me to find that everybody knew all about Major Kames but myself.'

'I am so sorry you were vexed,' said Maud.

Lady Dorothy moved to Maud's easy chair and sat down. 'I was very cross, my dear,' she said briefly. Then she turned her

face to the bed and blinked hard at Maud. The question that had been tormenting her all the evening was on her lips; she could keep it back no longer.

'Are you in earnest, Maud? I mean about Major Kames.' It seemed somehow like aiming a pistol-shot at Maud. Would Maud fall down on her pillow and collapse?

'Yes,' said Maud quietly, and she did not collapse.

'You really are?' exclaimed Lady Dorothy. 'I mean, do you actually want him to—well, to speak plainly—to propose again? That's what I mean.'

'I understand,' said Maud as quietly as before.

'And you don't think that if you saw him leaning on a stick, you know—and—getting stout—you would run away, as you did before when he had a really good figure?'

Maud coloured and shook her head.

'Well!' exclaimed Lady Dorothy, 'I am amazed! But what's to be done I'm sure I don't know.' And she waited for further enlightenment.

'Nothing can be done!' replied Maud simply.

'Nothing! Why not?' exclaimed her aunt, who had expected to hear Maud suggest some plan that she would consider unsuitable. But Maud seemed to have no plan, and the old lady looked disappointed.

'I don't deserve to have him now,' said Maud.

'Deserve, child! What has that got to do with it?' exclaimed her aunt. How extraordinarily unpractical it was of Maud to talk like this.

'I don't suppose he would trust me again,' said Maud, closing the book that she had till now kept open with one finger.

'Fiddlesticks about trust!' said Lady Dorothy. 'The only question is whether he is still in love with you. If he isn't, it's off; if he is, it's on again.'

Maud winced at this way of putting it; it was put as if neither she nor Major Kames were moral beings.

'I have given my promise, Aunt Dorothy, to be guided in the matter by Father Fitzherbert,' said Maud, bracing herself up for the coming storm.

'And who, in the name of wonder, is Father Fitzherbert?' demanded the old lady. The title 'Father' had escaped her notice before, but now that she was calmer she noticed it, and it offended her Protestant ears; also this avowal of Maud's roused her

suddenly to jealousy. What right had any Fitzherberts to usurp her position as patroness of Maud, and Maud's affairs?

'Father Fitzherbert knew Ursula,' explained Maud, 'and he knows Lionel and—me.'

'One of the men Ursula used to confess to!' said Lady Dorothy. 'And so Major Kames confesses. Well I should have thought he was too sensible a man to do anything so weak-minded.'

Maud did not reply; indeed, Lady Dorothy did not expect a reply. She was accustomed to make statements of a contentious kind when she was annoyed, statements that she suspected were not necessarily true, which were even probably false, but which relieved the tension of her nerves.

'I have just written to Father Fitzherbert,' said Maud, in a low voice, as if it cost her a good deal to speak, 'to tell him what I feel about—Lionel.'

'You have?' burst out Lady Dorothy. 'To this Fitzherbert?'

'I want him to know,' said Maud slowly; 'but nothing will come of it, Aunt Dorothy.'

'I should think nothing would come of it!' exclaimed the old lady, 'if you put it into the hands of a priest. Their one idea is to prevent marriage. If they had their own way no one would bring children into the world but the riffraff at the very bottom, and a fine state of things that would bring about. I have no patience with them! Is the letter posted?'

'Yes,' said Maud.

Lady Dorothy turned and looked into the fire.

'And what do you think he is going to do, now that he knows that you want to marry Major Kames?'

She spoke with obvious jealousy.

'I don't know,' said Maud.

'And don't care!' said Lady Dorothy, full of vexation. 'Maud, you're the most sensible woman in the world, except where your own happiness is concerned.'

'Father Fitzherbert will do whatever is best for Lionel—and me,' said Maud. 'Dear Aunt Dorothy, I have reason to trust him.'

'Oh, you think so!' said her aunt, 'Well, I should doubt that. You must remember that it is a year and a half since you broke off the engagement. You don't know what has happened since, especially if he has been ill. Why, at this moment some little calculating nurse may have been making him promise to marry her. Would you like that to happen?'

Maud did not answer.

Lady Dorothy got up from her chair : ' My dear, I quite forgot that I promised Noonoo faithfully that I would come back to him in a few minutes, and, as you know, promises made to a dumb animal are like debts of honour. I really must go.'

Lady Dorothy had also obtained the information she had desired. It was information of a most upsetting kind that touched the affairs of No. 2 Brown Street. It needed much thought. She came near to the bed, bent over to kiss her niece, and then looked at her narrowly as if she was a new acquaintance.

' I am going to write to Major Kames at once,' she said quietly, ' and I shall ask him to let me know how he is. I shall do that much.'

Maud put her arms round her aunt's neck, but she made no remark.

' Is this Fitzherbert,' asked Lady Dorothy, ' one of the Fitzherberts of Adingley ?'

' I think so,' said Maud, but she spoke as if she scarcely heard.

Lady Dorothy walked to the door with a slight sniff of satisfaction. ' They're all a little mad,' she said. It was certainly a positive proof of madness in any individual that he should, at this time of day, dress himself in a cloak and go about calling himself ' Father.'

Lady Dorothy went downstairs into the drawing-room slowly and thoughtfully. Suppose, after all, Maud was to marry Major Kames and go away and live at Orpenden ? Would this empty drawing-room be so very desolate ? A year ago Lady Dorothy would have thought so, but into her life had crept once more a congenial companionship ; she was not alone. Piccanoonoo was waiting for her in his basket. Not, it is true, with those piercing shrieks of impatience that she had loved so dearly and which were silenced for ever, but a little rogue lay there banging his tail on the side of the basket and staring at her with his large goggle eyes, full of satisfaction at her return. No, the drawing-room was not lonely after all, and then there would come frequent invitations to Orpenden ; there would be delightful short visits to break the monotony of winter and spring. People had never been eager to have darling Kiddie as their guest ; they did not understand his nature ; he was what is called ' vital.' Lady Dorothy loved him for being ' vital.' It was Ursula's lack of being ' vital ' as well as her lack of youth and beauty that had made Lady Dorothy indifferent to her.

Lady Dorothy loved—so she thought—the agitating and alluring qualities of a rich, heady personality. She was attracted—so she thought—by dear, warm, natural human nature, with its lovable spice of wickedness. She would not, of course, have put up with any rich headiness in her butler or her housemaid, or in any person whom she employed. Any such wealth in Mrs. Jackson's personality would have been inconvenient, and if she had reason to suppose that her family solicitors had any lovable spice of wickedness in their nature, she would have removed her affairs to the care of another firm; but that—as people say—is different.

Now Kiddie's successor was not 'vital,' and yet he was already popular. Lady Dorothy could fancy herself writing off notes to Maud at Orpenden saying this sort of thing:

'So many thanks—yes, of course—then please expect *us* to-morrow about four o'clock.'

However agreeable these anticipations were, the immediate question was, would anything at all come of Maud's change of mind?

Lady Dorothy went into the writing-room and sat down at her table. She began writing, and had anyone been in the room they would have seen her lips gradually shape themselves into an affable smile. She was smiling as if she was actually addressing her correspondent in the flesh; she found it easy to write, the words flowed from her pen without conscious effort. If only—if only she could ask him to come and see her as soon as he was well enough, or if only she could propose to go and call on him at Orpenden! She felt a strong conviction that if she could actually see him she could bring about 'a happy conclusion.' And how much she would enjoy seeing him again! Now, if *she* had been a girl engaged to a charming man like Major Kames, nothing in the wide world would have made her break the engagement off and risk losing him for ever!

CHAPTER XXVI.

MEANWHILE, upstairs, Maud lay back on her pillows. A book that she had been holding in her hand had fallen upon the floor; the lights were still burning. She had forgotten everything but that sinister remark of Lady Dorothy's that some other woman might at this moment be standing between herself and the man she had at last learned to love. Time was passing quickly; who

knew what might not have happened to Lionel Kames—what was actually happening? A sick man is so much at the mercy of his surroundings!

‘Nothing would come of it,’ she had said to Lady Dorothy, nothing would come of her confession to Father Fitzherbert that she had learned to love Lionel Kames; and yet as she lay there motionless, her eyes fixed mechanically before her, Maud knew that she had said those words only in self-defence, in order to force herself to face a future that she dreaded. Deep down in her mind, she hoped with a desperate energy that her words would prove false, and that something would come of it!

That February afternoon, a year and a half ago, when she came by such a strange chance upon Fitzherbert, and he asked her if she was strong enough and tender enough to ‘pretend’ to love the man she was engaged to marry—that afternoon seemed to her now to be a strange, unaccountable dream. On that night when the last sad intimate writing of Ursula’s had stirred in Maud’s heart such passionate emotion that the raging of the storm outside was unheard and forgotten, on that night a dormant element in Maud’s nature had come to life: the power of pity, and with it new thoughts about the man she had rejected and a new conception of the relations of human beings to one another, a new standard of duty and of mutual forbearance. As the days accumulated this conception had grown in strength, Ursula’s trust in Lionel became her own, Ursula’s sympathy for him became hers; she lived over and over again their relationship with each other until she was seized with a desperate hunger for something more than the creation of her own mind, a synthesis of memories; she was seized with a desperate hunger for his actual presence.

Her letter to Fitzherbert had gone that night, and he would get it in the morning, if he were in town. She would try to wait till Tuesday morning, and if no letter came then she would wire and implore him for an answer. She looked at her watch; it was eleven o’clock. It would be just possible for her to hear by lunch-time to-morrow—fifteen hours! Or she might hear after dinner at nine o’clock—twenty-two hours! If she did not hear before the first post on Tuesday, she would have to wait thirty-three hours! That would be the limit of her endurance. She had waited for many days patiently, and now even hours had become intolerable.

Even suppose that Fitzherbert answered her letter promptly,

he might not propose to help her in any way. Although she deserved no help, she was certain that he would help her. She had no fear of it; [her fear was that he might be away on some fresh mission, and that the letter would not reach him immediately, or when it did reach him it might arrive at a moment when he was busy. Above all, what she chiefly feared was that the whole matter might have been taken out of Fitzherbert's hands by Lionel himself, and that Lionel at that very moment, believing her to have forgotten him, might be pledging his future to another woman. That thought made Maud sick at heart.

Should she wire to Lionel to-morrow morning? Wire what? Wire that she had made him wait for nearly two years, but that she could not wait for thirty-three hours!

Apart from her promise to Fitzherbert, which must be kept, the idea of thrusting herself upon Lionel before she had some proof that he still remembered her was repulsive. Fitzherbert was right in telling her to put the matter into his hands—if only the hours would pass!

She must try to sleep, because every hour that she lay awake only prolonged her misery. She put out the light and lay down.

Maud lay, with eyes fast shut and a prayer upon her lips, shutting the portals of her spirit against the ominous Powers of the Night, and, soon after the great bell that watches over the sleeping city had struck one, she fell into a sleep without dreams.

The next morning she awoke with the consciousness that at least one night had been put behind her. She ought to be thankful for that. A letter might come before nightfall. It is easier to be patient in broad daylight; so much may happen while the sun travels slowly westward.

Lady Dorothy scanned her face narrowly when she came downstairs to breakfast.

'No letter from Mr. Fitzherbert?' she said.

The remark was so preposterous that Maud, depressed as she was, laughed aloud.

'He will have only just got my letter, Aunt Dorothy,' she said.

'Humph!' said the elder lady, as if, nevertheless, he would and could have received the letter and replied simultaneously had he not been going about dressed in a cloak and calling himself 'Father.'

All that day neither of the two women thought of anything else but the letter—that did not come.

Yesterday Maud would have shrunk painfully from hearing the name of Lionel Kames pronounced aloud by anyone ; but now it was a relief to her to know that Lady Dorothy shared her secret, and was waiting, too, to know what the future would bring.

When letters were brought in at lunch there was no letter addressed in Fitzherbert's hand.

'Humph !' said Lady Dorothy again.

Maud smiled a little. 'I must wait,' she said, and sighed.

After dinner the same thing happened—no letter !

How slowly the hours crept along ! They were at the threshold of another night. This would be the last night. Maud went upstairs to her room with a fixed determination to wait no longer than the morning. If no letter came then, she would wire to Fitzherbert for instructions. Could it be possible that he was still distrustful of her, was afraid that what she loved was an idealised portrait, painted by the glamour of her own fancy, and that when brought face to face with the real Lionel Kames she would shrink from the actual personality of the living man, a man, seamed with the experience of half a lifetime, trying to retrieve wasted time ; generous, but faulty ?

Were these Fitzherbert's thoughts about her ? or had he guessed the change that had taken place in her ? In the old days she could admire or despise passionately ; pity she did not feel. She felt it now—pity that is born of the consciousness of the tragedy of all human life, of the community of grief.

It was this pity that had engendered love, and it had grown little by little, until it had gathered to a torrent—late in the girl's life—just as her youth was passing. Was it too late ?

The second night passed away—and the morning came. The maid brought letters to Maud's bedside, but among them was still no letter from Fitzherbert. Maud took paper and pencil, and, sitting up in her bed, she began to compose a message. While she was writing a knock came at her bedroom door ; it opened, and her Aunt Dorothy came in. The cord of the old lady's eye-glasses was hanging loose, and her dressing-gown had been thrown hastily over her. She had a letter in her hand. Maud could tell by her face that Lionel had written it.

'A letter from Lionel !' she exclaimed, and Lady Dorothy came straight to Maud's bed. Maud could see the large handwriting, which she had in old days despised, because it did not look scholarly. Her hand shook as she took the letter ; it was like a letter from

some dear one whom she had thought dead. She opened it and tried to read it. Tears ran down her cheeks, blotting out the words, and making them unreadable.

'I am afraid I can't read it,' she said; 'not just now!'

Lady Dorothy was much surprised and disconcerted.

'Why, my dear, you are upset,' she said. 'Well, it's a charming letter, full of tender remembrance of Ursula, and gratitude for our gratitude. Read it some other time. Keep it!'

The old lady nodded her head once or twice patronisingly, and then she turned away and went to the door, refraining from the remark 'No letter from Mr. Fitzherbert,' which she had intended to make, in order to drive home the truth of that clerical person's incompetence in affairs of the heart. For a long time Maud found herself unable to think connectedly. When she could think she sat up and looked at the telegram form on which she had begun to write. It was on the table by her bed. Only her name was needed to complete it. She wrote her name, and then a sudden and unaccountable impulse took strong possession of her and she took up the paper and tore it into small pieces. Then she read that letter—once, twice, many times.

All that morning she felt as if she was living in a dream. She went out into the morning air, walking along by her aunt's side, quiescent and almost without thoughts, like one hypnotised, and she was strangely calm in her mind; her anxiety seemed suddenly to have left her. She was waiting without impatience and without fear.

Lady Dorothy was surprisingly sympathetic and asked her no questions. When at lunch-time no letters at all were brought in, she said nothing; she did not even mention Fitzherbert's name.

After lunch, Maud went for a drive, taking Noonoo with her. Kames' letter was tucked into her dress. The day was slipping away and yet Maud was doing nothing. She was possessed with this strong impression—that the future had shaped itself independently of her thoughts and that she need do nothing; in fact, that there was nothing for her to do. So calm and resigned was she that when she returned to the house she even noted the presence of a cat seated on the stucco pillar of the gate. At the sight of Noonoo it turned and twisted away among the palings. Maud called to it with all the persuasiveness she knew, and finally it relaxed so far as to consent to return, Noonoo being obviously harmless. It again seated itself upon the pillar, and there it sat, pretending to have lost all consciousness of her presence. When

she called to it, it merely stretched its chin high in the air, and looked keenly across the street, pretending to see something of importance, with the air of a person who wishes to remain exclusive without being actually rude.

Maud went up the steps and let herself into the house with her latchkey. She found Jackson in the hall, carrying the tray up for tea earlier than usual.

He turned round and spoke to her.

'Her Ladyship told me to tell you, Miss,' he said, 'that she is in the writing-room with Mr. Fitzherbert.'

'With whom?' she asked.

'With Mr. Fitzherbert.'

This, then, was the end. This was what she had been waiting for.

Maud went upstairs and walked into the drawing-room. It was empty. She could hear her aunt's voice in the next room. She must have heard her come, for the door opened between the rooms and Lady Dorothy came out, her cheeks rather flushed, and behind her came a tall figure, which Maud had learned to associate with what was most important in her life. He smiled when their eyes met. All was well. Maud felt sure of it; the certainty of it suffused her whole frame with warmth.

'Father Fitzherbert and I have arranged it,' said Lady Dorothy, speaking his name as if he had long been her most intimate friend. 'He is going to take us over to-morrow to Orpenden to see our dear invalid, Major Kames. Well, Maud, what do you say?'

Maud said nothing but an almost whispered 'Thanks.' She took Fitzherbert's hand and leaned upon it for a moment, her eyes downcast and a slight tremble on her lips, that he alone noticed. In another moment Maud had recovered her composure.

'I am so glad,' she said, 'I am so glad, Aunt Dorothy!'

'I should think so,' said that lady. 'I can't imagine anybody not being glad at the prospect of seeing Major Kames, such a charming man!'

To her excited imagination it seemed as if there could be no further obstacle to Maud's marriage with Major Kames. In fact, it seemed as if the whole dismal episode of Major Kames' disappearance had never been, and they had slipped back to eighteen months ago, except for the sad fact that Major Kames was a little lame, and therefore threatened with stoutness.

(To be concluded.)

